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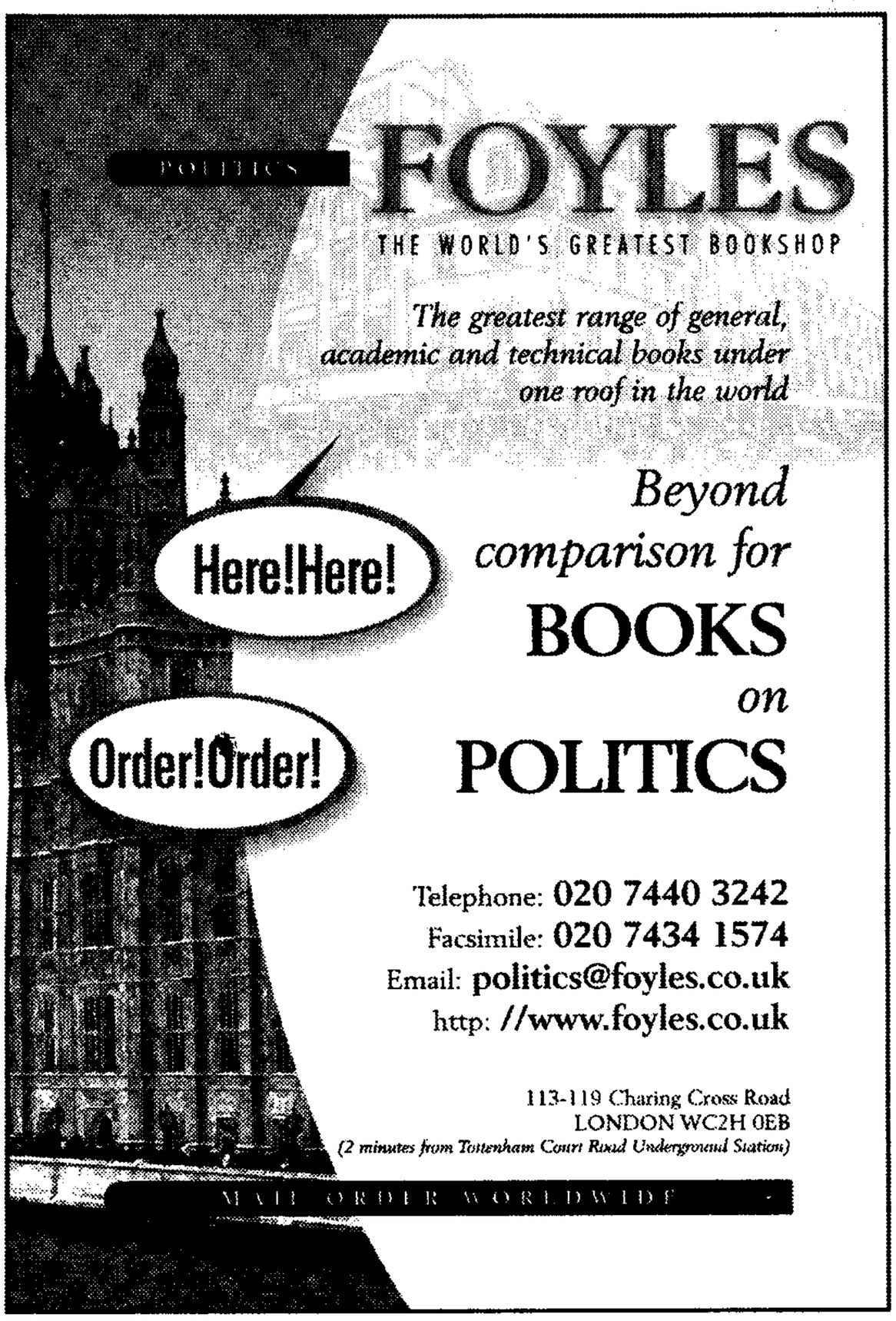

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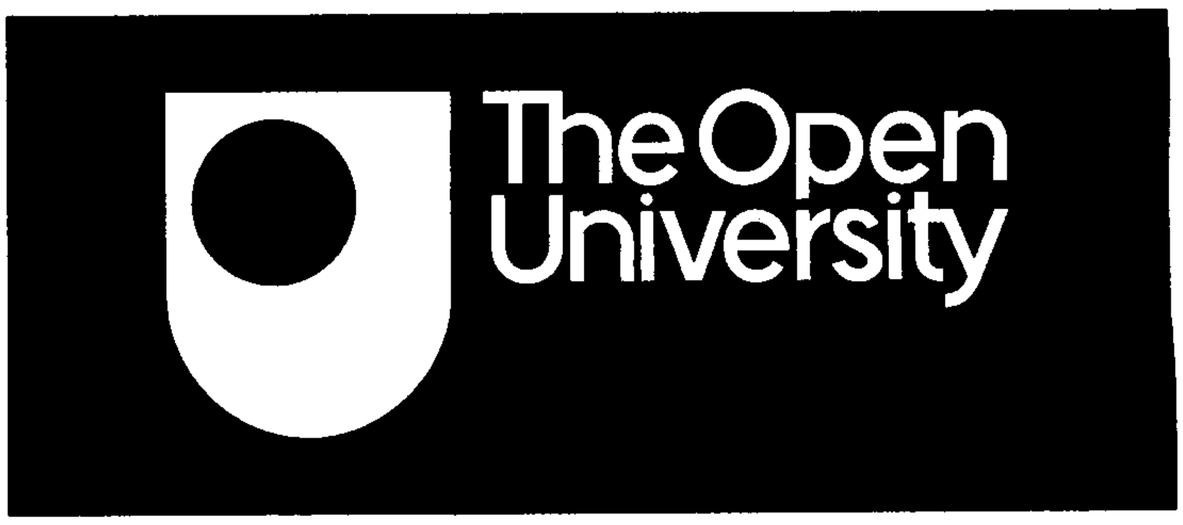

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Gnome

AS POLLING day approaches, I know that people will be looking to the Daily Gnome for guidance on how to cast their vote on 7 June.

Having weighed up the issues, listened to the rhetoric and studied the manifestos, I have come to the conclusion that the country would be best served by the party which is most likely to win.

That is why, in all conscience, I must support Mr Blair unless a miracle happens for the Tories in the next week and I find my paper advising you to return Mr Hague.

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"It's not about personality – Hague hasn't got one."

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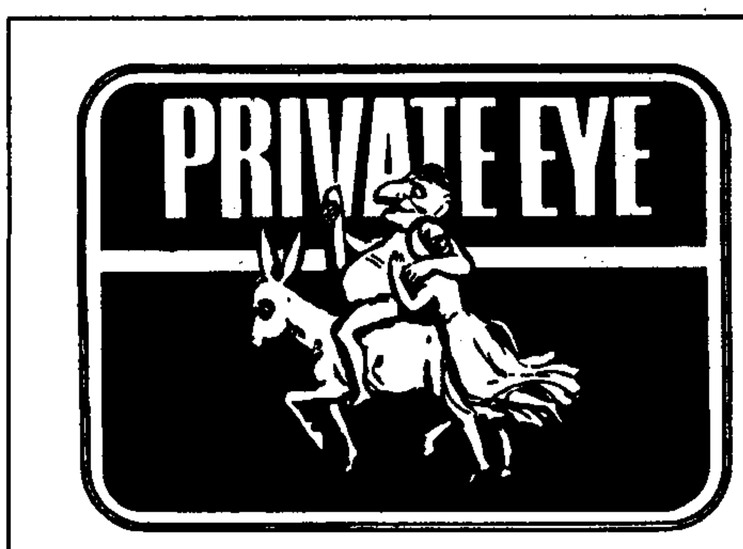

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MIRROR, mirror, on the wall, who is the biggest control freak of them all? Step forward Margaret McDonagh, Labour's steely general secretary, whose term in office has been marked by repeated ham-fisted interventions that have usually resulted in calamitous results (for Labour).

Ms McDonagh may claim that she has only ever carried out orders; but her latest broadside against the BBC, ITN and Sky TV alleging collusion between broadcasters and anti-Blair protestors during prime ministerial walkabouts, was a memo too far. Even as journalists at Labour press conferences were being offered "helpful" questions to ask Messrs Blair and Brown in return for preferential treatment — by Anji Hunter and Lance Price, no less — both failed publicly to come to her aid when hacks asked about the provenance of the McDonagh memo.

The charge sheet against Ms McDonagh reads as follows: fixing the Welsh Labour leadership elections for Alun Michael over Rhodri Morgan; result: Labour haemorrhaged safe seats and Morgan was eventually permitted to pick up the pieces. Fixing the London mayoral selection for Frank Dobson over Ken Livingstone; result: Leninspart stood as an independent candidate and humiliated Dobbo. Fixed selection of Shaun Woodward in St Helens; result: thousands of Labour campaigners refused to campaign anywhere.

And the latest wheeze by Ms McDonagh and her cohorts? To strong-arm the Communication Workers' Union into postponing its pre-election conference. The traditional two-day general conference provides an opportunity for assorted post office workers to pass judgement on the immense funds that their union hands over to Labour. Not surprisingly, given Mr Tony's predilection for private sector solutions to public service problems, members of the post office union are in somewhat angry mood.

You bet not. Sadly for McDonagh and Millbank, the attempt to force a cancellation of the conference came to nought during a recent meeting of the union's executive.

Such competence is of course going to be rewarded by a seat in the new People's House of Lords.

THE unexpected receipt of a £34m investment grant at the end of April, after years of neglect from central government, should have alerted the voters of St Helens that something was afoot.

After nearly 20 years of relative non-representation, their philandering MP Gerry Bermingham announced his last minute resignation — claiming he could not bear to desert his two-year-old son by wife number three for the fleshpots of Westminster. (Grand-dad Bermingham's concern for his offspring was indeed touching, considering he was taken to court a few years ago and ordered to pay maintenance after he got a local party worker pregnant.)

On local radio he denied he had been offered a peerage in exchange for handing over his rock-solid Labour seat to renegade Tory, Shaun "My Mother Was A Barmaid" Woodward.

Prior to the selection meeting, a party official had talked about "new" Labour's commitment to seeing more women in parliament. This was done in St Helens South by deliberately excluding three prominent women, including St Helens council leader Marie Rimmer, from the final shortlist, on the grounds that, er, they might beat Woodward. The eventual "choice" was between Woodward and three no-hopers. Party members going to the selection meeting were gobsmacked to learn that they were denied a chance to vote for Rimmer.

NO SOONER is President Blair safely reinstalled at No 10 on 8 June than the wraps will come off his foot-and-mouth cover-up with a vengeance.

MAFF and the army are standing by to launch a frenzy of killing to dwarf anything yet seen. On 15 June they are due to begin slaughtering every animal on hundreds more farms in Swaledale and adjacent areas of north Yorkshire.

The same squads will then move on to "clear" a large area of Lincolnshire. A similar spree is scheduled for hundreds of farms in Brecon and Radnor, south Wales.

In Devon, meanwhile, MAFF has bought and resprayed 300 lorries, without markings, in preparation for the mass-clearance of hundreds more farms on Dartmoor and Exmoor.

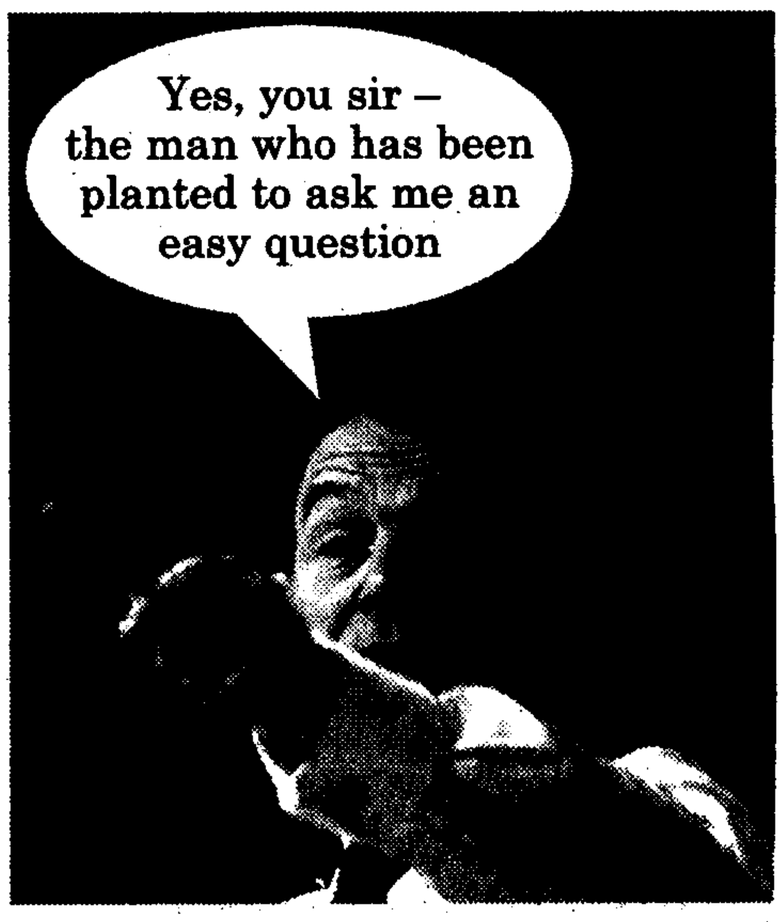
The paid killers involved, vets and slaughtermen, are grateful for the election, which has given them a well-earned break, on between £2,000 and £5,000 of taxpayers' money per week. Farmers will be told that, if they wish to restock, they will only be allowed to buy in a much smaller number of animals than those they have lost, because the real hidden agenda is to achieve a massive 20-30 percent reduction in Britain's excessive sheep population.

On the need for this MAFF, the National Farmers' Union and the European commission are all agreed. It may be unfortunate that, under both EU and UK law, this mass-cull of millions of healthy animals is totally illegal. But when did a little matter of breaking the law worry this government?

DESPITE being pursued through St Helens by a Daily Mail-sponsored butler bearing a silver tray replete with champagne flutes, the distinctly plebeian Shaun Woodward has joined the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union.

While Woodward would be the last to admit not knowing the difference between a lathe and a lawn mower, some AEEU members are furious that Shaun's application was waved through in days so the way was clear for the union's general secretary, Sir Ken Jackson, to direct delegates in St Helens Labour party to vote for him.

Traditionally AEEU members must serve an apprenticeship of up to seven years before they may be considered worthy of seeking their union's nomination for parliament. But for Shaun it all took place in well under seven days. Nice one, Sir Ken!



NEWS

MORE news of Tony Blair's favourite academic, Professor Roy Anderson of Imperial College, who created the computer model used by MAFF to claim that the number of foot-and-mouth cases would fall to zero by 7 June, thus allowing the PM to call an election for that very date.

As we noted in the last *Eye*, a certain amount of statistical jiggery-pokery was required to achieve this desirable (and implausible) result. But, we now learn, this isn't the first time Prof Anderson's mathematical talents have proved useful to a Labour prime minister's electoral needs.

Back in 1987 Anderson was invited by Norway's prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland to help produce an "independent assessment" of how many minke whales Norwegians could sustainably kill every year in the north-east Atlantic. The International Whaling Commission had introduced a moratorium on commercial minke whaling, which Brundtland feared would lose her support in the whaling constituencies of northern Norway. She hoped that a report by a four-man committee of experts – chaired by one of her oldest friends, Professor Lars Walloe – would persuade the IWC to ease the ban.

Surprise, surprise: Walloe, Anderson and their two colleagues came up with exactly the figure – 200 whales – which the whalers thought they needed to make a profit. But then the analytical model used to make this calculation was published. A mathematical biologist on the IWC's scientific committee went through the alegbra and discovered "fundamental flaws in the methodology": Anderson and his chums had achieved the result Brundtland wanted, ie a "safe" catch of 200, only by creating wholly unreal (indeed "impossible") parameters.

The scientific committee duly gave Anderson's work the treatment such rubbish deserved. Come the post-mortem on MAFF's culling policy, will Anderson's foot-and-mouth model be exposed to similar critical scrutiny by his fellow-scientists?

THOUGH passengers have been returning to the railways following the post-Hatfield chaos, certain sections of the rail industry have been using said chaos as an excuse to close down still more services and sack still more workers.

A good example is the Red Star sameday parcel service, once the pride and glory of the old British Rail. The service was flogged off to former managers in a typical privatisation spree in 1996, and then sold on again, at much profit, to Lynx, Britain's biggest independent parcels carrier, in 1999.

On 16 May David Burtenshaw, chief executive of Lynx, sent a memo to all favoured customers with the news that thanks to the "profound damage" to the "market perception of rail services", the whole service was now being abandoned and 250 workers sacked. Not to worry though: "Lynx Express will provide a full range of services for you and your customers". Er, by road and air.

Street Of Shame

MICHAEL PILGRIM was sacked as editor of the *Sunday Express* last week, only one day after his complaints about Richard Desmond's editorial interference in the paper had been publicised by the *Observer*. But his hopes of being hailed as a heroic martyr in the cause of press freedom were quickly dashed.

In his long and inglorious career on Fleet Street, "Mad Mike" has made far too many enemies to expect sympathy from his old colleagues now: he has been rightly described as "one of the most charmless people ever to edit a national newspaper". (At the *Guardian* and *Observer*, he used to enliven managerial meetings by applying for the jobs of executives whom he didn't like.) Besides, the sequence of events leading up to his dismissal aroused understandable suspicions among cynical Pilgrim-watchers.

On the previous Wednesday, at one of Desmond's regular meetings with executives, Pilgrim was subjected to a lengthy, foul-mouthed harangue from his cigar-chomping proprietor. All those present, including Mad Mike, realised that his days were numbered.

Pilgrim then returned to his office and wrote a pious memo to the proprietor objecting to the management pressure on him to do things "outside the legal and ethical remit of a newspaper". He listed various stories which had been spiked because they were about Desmond's friends or potential business associates, and others which had been put in purely to damage Desmond's rivals and enemies such as Conrad Black. By some mysterious process, the memo then "leaked" to the *Observer*.

"I have been asked on several occasions to suppress evidence of wrongdoing," he wrote. "I have been asked to suppress stories for 'commercial reasons'... I have been under ridiculous pressure to run unjustified stories to settle scores." All perfectly true: but what he omitted to add was that he had obeyed these requests. For weeks now, the *Eye* has been chronicling Pilgrim's willingness to let Desmond use the *Sunday Express* business section as his own private adventure playground.

An indication of how strenuously the valiant-for-truth Pilgrim resisted these "pressures" came as long ago as February, when Desmond put the line "Win Diamonds Worth £15,000" at the top of the *Sunday Express*'s front page – even though the prize in question was in fact a diamond pendant worth £499. Did the editor remonstrate forcefully at this shameless attempt to mislead his readers? Er, no. "I disagree, Richard," he murmured. "But it's your train set."

ANONYMOUS "advisers" close to Richard Desmond say he has already repaid £50m of the £97m he borrowed from Commerzbank to buy the Express group.

How come, considering that Dirty Des's pockets aren't that deep, he's still struggling to find a buyer for his porn-mag empire and he's pouring a fortune into a promotional push to prop up the Express titles' circulation? Is there perhaps a secret benefactor?

Step forward, Mohamed Fayed. The blossoming love affair between Dirty Des and Filthy Fayed, first revealed in the Eye, now seems to be at the heavy petting stage. The Phoney Pharaoh switched Harrods' advertising to the *Express* and lavished praise on the paper's new owner; Desmond, in turn, dished out free copies of Fayed's *Punch* to hapless *Sunday Express* readers and ran puff pieces in OK! about Chairman Mo's unsung work for charridee; Fayed reciprocated by offering one of Dodi's old Ferraris as a prize in an *Express* competition; Desmond devoted two pages of the *Daily Express* to Fayed's barmy conspiracy theories about Diana'n'Dodi...

Can it be long before this disgusting dalliance becomes a formal marriage? At the Grey Lubyanka, rumour has it that Fayed is already quietly putting money into the group and intends to bankrol a Sunday edition of the *Daily Star*, which could be launched later this year. He and his adviser Max Clifford have apparently decided that, while a reelected Labour government might well block the Phoney Pharaoh from buying a national newspaper such as the People, the Blairites could do little if he was merely a "partner" (or, better still, "stakeholder") in Dirty Des's Express operation.

Meanwhile, Desmond's liaison with Kelvin MacKenzie is coming along nicely too. It's now suspected that Kelvin, who has hitherto been a behind-the-scenes adviser to Dirty Des, may soon take up a lucrative boardroom role. The rumour has been strengthened by the meltdown at Kelvin's Wireless Group, which is running out of cash following losses of £34m and has been put up for sale. (The biggest loser, incidentally, will be Fayed's Liberty Media, which took a 30 percent stake in the company on MacKenzie's recommendation.) How better to ease this blow to Kelvin's ego than with a big new job running Express Newspapers with his mate Desmond?

If nothing else, a triumvirate of Dirty Des, the Phoney Pharaoh and Kelvin MacFrenzy would be guaranteed to set a world boardroom record for four-letter words.

IT IS more than a month since the *Mirror* launched an advertising campaign boasting about its hard-hitting news credentials: "The guts not the gutter". So it is good to see that the Moron has lived up to its word and turned its back on salacious gossip and titillating headlines in favour of serious stories.

In recent weeks readers' lives have been enriched by a series of front-page articles into the psyche of "pneumatic" model Jordan, penned by that seasoned purveyor of hard news, 3am girl Jessica Callan. Thanks to Ms Callan's "gutsy" journalism from the battlefront in Monaco's "swishest nightclubs", the world now knows that Jordan's boyfriend, Manchester United footballer Dwight Yorke, "sleeps around... if it's put on a plate he will take it."

When Yorke suggested a threesome with him and Jordan, Ms Callan bravely took the moral high ground: "As a clean-living 3am girl, I naturally rejected his kind offer, which, I don't mind admitting, rather shocked me." After this traumatic experience it must have taken real guts for Ms Callan to return the following night so that she could continue to file reports: "Yesterday I revealed how Jordan spends most of her time in the loo or fretting about her soccer star boyfriend Dwight Yorke's womanising. Today I bring you the harrowing tale of dastardly Dwight's dirty dancing with the stunning Ms Hunter [Rod Stewart's ex] and how Jordan's big green eyes filled with tears as she watched the duo's brazen display."

However, the *Sun* has been displaying its moronic side too by plastering the well-upholstered Jordan across its front page. Clearly, where Dirty Des's *Star* leads, the other red tops are sure to follow...

THE *Daily Mirror* was indignant at the Tory party broadcast which implied that Labour was responsible for two rapes because of its early release scheme for prisoners.

"The dark and brooding broadcast was condemned by penal watchdogs," reported Paul Gilfeather, the paper's Whitehall editor. "Juliet Lyon of the Prison Reform Trust said: 'This is scaremongering...' And author Michael Dobbs, ex-Tory party vice-chairman, said: 'It comes close to accusing Labour of being directly responsible for two rapes.' Labour called the broadcast 'negative campaigning'." And so on.

Perhaps the broadcast was inspired by a sensational "exclusive" published in the *Sun* last July. "Almost 22,000 criminals have been released from prison early by the Labour government," it revealed. "They include drug dealers, sex offenders, muggers and burglars... And 400 of them have committed further crimes while on early release – including two rapes."

The author of this story was the political correspondent of the *Sun*, who has since moved to the *Mirror*. His name? Paul Gilfeather.

JUST FANCY THAT!

'[Dr Marianne Parry, medical director of Marie Stopes International] said young people should think "long and hard" before they embarked on sexual activity while away from home.'

— BBC News (web)

"She's always like this after watching Nigella!"

WHAT has the doyenne of the Glendas, the *Daily Mail's* Lynda Lee-Potter, got against Cherie Blair's father, the actor Tony Booth?

When Booth unexceptionally remarked at the time of the Sophie Rhys-Jones story in April that members of the royal family, on the whole, tended to be arrogant, greedy and stupid, Lee-Potter battily lambasted him for "betraying" his son-in-law, Tony Blair, on the grounds that Booth enjoys the "reflected glory" of Tony being PM and therefore shouldn't do or say anything that might embarrass him.

"Mr Booth is the disreputable man who has been shown far more loyalty by his daughter and son-in-law than he deserves," she wrote. "He walked out on Cherie and her sister when they were very young... He's been welcomed back into the family he deserted and, once again, he's betrayed them."

On 12 April last year Glenda was hammering home the same point: "Actor Tony Booth says he worries about his daughter Cherie Blair. I suggest the time for worrying is long past. He should have worried long ago when he ditched his wife Gale and two young daughters and broke their hearts. He left them to struggle on their own as he continued his drunken womanising in London. He was utterly selfish and irresponsible when they needed him..."

In July 1997 Lee-Potter wrote: "His daughters, son-in-law and his sensible ex-wife Gale long ago went through the pain barrier as far as Mr Booth is concerned..." And in April 1996, when Booth's then-wife left him: "Mr Booth has already had far better than he deserves. His children have forgiven him for being an absent, irresponsible father. His daughter Cherie has been saintly in her loyalty... Drunk or sober, he's boringly garrulous with an overpowering ego. In fact, I'm amazed his wife stood his noisy, exhausting presence for as long as she did."

This sounds personal. And indeed it is. But Tony Booth is less voluble on the subject than Ms Lee-Potter. In explanation of the old bat's bile he mutters mysteriously: "One night 40 years ago... and a forgotten telephone number."

REGULAR readers of the *Evening Standard's ES* magazine will have noticed a small addendum to the "Something for the weekend" column which for the past few weeks has been penned by the star of Channel 4's *Trigger Happy TV*, Dom Joly, stating simply: "This will be the last of Dom Joly's columns, as he has requested time to sort out some personal matters".

The personal matter in question is Dom Joly's decision to resign. Joly thought it would be funny to respond to a critic who attacked him week after week in print. However the editor of *ES* magazine, Mimi Spencer, refused to print Joly's column in full, because he named the critic — none other than *Evening Standard* hackette, Lucy Etherington.

Infuriated that while Ms Etherington was free to slag him off in the paper they both wrote for, he could not respond in kind, however humorously, Joly resigned. This prompted La Spencer to send him a school-ma'am-ish letter, stating: "One of the first rules of journalism is that you should never attack your own". Really?

ELECTIONWATCH

Family Values

AT THE start of the election campaign, *PR Week* asked Charlie Whelan what pitfalls the party leaders should avoid. "I guess the worst thing that they could probably do is anything involving their mums and dads," the former spinwallah replied, "which always ends in disaster." Or, he might have added, sisters and cousins and aunts.

But we had it on the authority of Tony Blair that he would not be dragging his children into the fray, and Messrs Hague and Kennedy seemed to agree that it would unseemly to involve their families. This is, after all, a serious political campaign, devoted to the *ishoos*...

8 May: On the day when Tony Blair announces the general election date, William Hague visits Watford with Ffion. "She is enjoying it already," the Tory leader tells reporters.

9 May: In an interview with the *Daily Mirror*, Tony Blair insists that he won't expose his family to the glare of the media. He then talks at length about baby Leo: "He is very nearly walking. He crawls at speed now. You turn around and he is shooting off and stumbling over all sorts of things." Sounds like John Prescott. In the London *Evening Standard*, Blair adds that Leo is "my perfect baby really, because he gurgles and laughs when he sees me".

11 May: Appearing on GMTV, Blair discloses that his 15-year-old son Nicky has bought a drum kit. "I think that's every parent's worst nightmare," he adds gravely.

12 May: Cherie Blair spends her day off campaigning with Tony in Nottingham, where she sings "Roll Out the Barrel". Her husband declines to join in, saying: "I don't want to spoil it because I don't know the words." She urges him to "sing them that one you sing Leo". "What, Old Macdonald?" Tony replies. Cherie then informs the media that the ring she is wearing, which belonged to Pat Phoenix of *Coronation Street*, was a 40th birthday present from her father, Tony Booth.

13 May: Lauren Booth, the PM's sister-in-law, pens an election diary for the *Observer*. "Cherie and Tony Blair are an odd couple," she muses. In the *Sunday Times*, William Hague's dad Nigel declares: "Given the size of Labour's majority, it would be a miracle if William could defeat them after one term." The Tory leader's aunt Mary Jefferson chips in as well, claiming that "William will have won if he can get Labour's majority down to less than 100." Meanwhile, Stella Hague rushes to the defence of her son after the GMB union reprints a famous photo of young William wearing a baseball cap at Alton Towers. "It is pathetic when people resort to getting so personal about politics," she fumes. "Politicians are not in a beauty contest, that's not the point of it."

14 May: Charles Kennedy reveals "the ace up his election sleeve": Sarah Gurling, 31, his girlfriend. On a visit to a nursery in Islington, Kennedy tells the target audience of three year olds: "My name's Charles. This is Sarah. Say hello, Sarah." Ms Gurling explains later that "I want to support Charles all that I can, probably doing a mixture of work behind the scenes."

15 May: On the *Today* programme the prime minister's father-in-law Tony Booth says that Tony Blair's treatment of pensioners has been "appalling... an absolute mistake... a complete insult". Out on the campaign trail, Andrew Pierce of *The Times* asks Ffion: "Who was your favourite Womble, Mrs Hague?" Silence. But she kisses several babies.

16 May: The Lib Dems screen their first party election broadcast of the campaign. It shows Charles Kennedy relaxing at home in the Highlands while his parents play folk tunes on the fiddle and keyboards.

17 May: Phyllis Prescott, 83, pays tribute to the virility of her son, the deputy prime minister, who has been brawling in the street. "He would have been less of a man if he had not reacted in the way he did," she says. Meanwhile Ffion Hague is winning rave reviews from the *Daily Telegraph*. "In the middle of a field close to the East of England showground, a sharp wind blew her carefully coiffed, but by no means blue rinsed, blonde hair wildly across her face but didn't for a second dislodge her smile," drools Jane Gordon. "Ffion's appearance has been a triumph of understated good taste."

18 May: Ffion Hague tells Sky News that electioneering is "hard work". In expansive mood, she adds: "I am very well thank you. I am really enjoying the campaign."

19 May: Ffion Hague plays noughts-and-crosses with 10-year-old Alastair Ion in the middle of the Tory leader's "meet the people" session in Tynemouth. Alastair beats Ffion twice.

20 May: Tony Blair reveals that his drum-playing son Nicky "is into the Foo Fighters at the moment, and they're not bad". Not to be outdone, William Hague boasts that "I've got Ffion with me all the time. It's a really nice aspect of campaigning that we are together every day – and every night." Blair's sister-in-law Lauren Booth takes to the road in a white stretch limo, packed with champagne and cigars, to follow Tony's battle bus about the country on behalf of Channel 5 news. "I'm not stitching up the in-laws," she maintains. "I'm standing up for the right of journalists not to be treated like animals." The *Sunday Telegraph* reveals that Lauren's mum – the prime minister's stepmother-in-law – is being threatened with eviction from her flat because the Labour-controlled council in Barnet has failed to pay her housing benefit. "Of course I blame the government," Lauren Booth says. Oh, and it's Leo Blair's first birthday. "He doesn't care whether I am prime minister or not," Leo's dad tells the *Sunday People*.

22 May: Interviewed by the *Guardian* about his policies, William Hague denies that Ffion has turned Trappist. "She's spoken for herself," he insists. So she isn't mute? "You'll have to ask her yourself – but you won't get an answer."

23 May: William Hague defends his wife's silent role during the campaign. "I didn't marry her to be an asset," he informs a television interviewer. "She's who I'm married to." The *Daily Telegraph* carries an important 2,000-word feature about William Hague's old family friend Doreen Whitehead. "When I met her," Alice Thomson reports, "she had just had supper with Mr Hague's parents, Nigel and Stella; the following night she was seeing William to give him another chocolate cake made from her grandmother's recipe. Her cakes are fuelling him through the campaign and she'll be up at 6am on polling day to cook a fresh batch." Doreen reveals that William never loses his temper or wallows in self-pity: "His aunt Marge, his mother and I do his worrying for him." And, it seems, give his interviews for him as well...

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

THE PARTY OF BUSINESS

THE list of 48 business people who wrote to the *Times* supporting the government was padded out with the usual suspects.

It included Biotech entrepreneur Chris Evans; Lord Haskins; Lord Hollick; Chai Patel; Lord Paul; Alec Reed; Gerry Robinson; Gulam Noon; Matt Thomson; and Moni Varma. All of them have given money to "new" Labour and most have been appointed to government quangos.

Another signatory was Chris Powell, head of Labour's former advertising firm and brother of Blair's chief of staff, Jonathan Powell. Sandy Leitch of Zurich Financial signed up as part of his long-running campaign to suck up to the government. Leitch already heads Labour's "New Deal Task Force", his firm gives the party money and he has given a top job to "new" Labour mouthpiece Wallace Dobbin.

In a grotesque display of sycophancy, Zurich sponsors the "Scottish Politician of the year" awards, as judged by Leitch & Dobbin. For the last two years at its gala dinner it has handed Gordon Brown a prize for being "best Scot at Westminster". Leitch's firm did of course come unstuck in the pensions mis-selling scandal (see *Eyes passim*). But there is a more personal reason for Leitch's devotion to the cause: he is desperate for an honour. Surely by now he has done enough to get one?

Allan Leighton was listed on the letter as "Chief Executive, Going Plural" and was spun to the press as being current chairman of the lastminute.com board and a former Asda-Walmart executive. No space, then, to mention that trade and industry secretary Stephen Byers gave the same Allan Leighton a job on the board of the post office just over a month ago.

Leighton, once a protégé of Tory Archie Norman but now a fully paid up member of the Blairite tendency, owes his place on the board to Labour's unspoken wish to privatise the post office. His experience of Wal-Mart's anti-union industrial relations are also exciting for Byers, who needs to break the post office unions before he can flog the whole thing off.

The signatories of the *Times* letter praised the "growing sense of enterprise and innovation" under Labour – and by and large their companies provide the proof. However, Labour-supporting Paul Barron, president of Alstom UK, must be a little miffed that transport supremo John Prescott did not pick his consortium to run the London underground. Still, the endless trade trips and export credit guarantees Labour ministers have given to support Alstom's overseas power and oil businesses must be some consolation. In particular Labour has backed Alstom contracts in Kosovo, Croatia and Malaysia.

Ronald Cohen, chair of investment group of APAX partners, is clearly drawn to Labour because its expansion of private finance initiative schemes will open up swathes of the public sector to his private investments. Cohen chairs chancellor Gordon Brown's "Social Investment Task Force", looking at how finance capital can make money from the poor.

Trevor Chinn, of Lex services, also has a lot to thank the government for: it gave Lex a £500m PFI contract to provide the army's civilian vehicles. Prescott also made Chinn vice-chairman of the "Commission for Integrated Transport" and a member of the "Cleaner Vehicle Task Force".

One name on the *Times* list sure to electrify "old Labour" voters is that of BUPA chairman Bryan Sanderson. The fact that BUPA is now a Labour backer stems from the government's announced intention to increase privatisation in the NHS. Sanderson may even owe his top job at BUPA to Labour: previously Sanderson, who comes from a BP background, was just a BUPA board member. However, Labour made him head of the "learning skills council". He was already a member of the industrial development advisory board and served time on the competitiveness task forces. These obviously good relations with the government of the day impressed his fellow BUPA directors who promptly elected him chairman. Sanderson has also shown his commitment to the Labour cause as a director of job-cutting steel firm, Corus.

THE EX-PARTY OF BUSINESS

THE Conservatives meanwhile fielded an impressive 144 "top" businessmen to write to the *Telegraph* about the "significant threat to future prosperity" threatened by the Labour party.

However, the fact that the list of "businessmen" included former Tory ministers like Lords Moore, Walker and Young; or former Conservative conference chair Raymond Monbiot took off some of the shine.

And was Lady Patten warning that Labour was taking Thatcherite reforms "for granted" because of her experience on the board of Somerfield — or because she is the wife of former Tory minister John Patten? (Interestingly he did not sign up — perhaps because his firms, Amey and Lockheed, have done so well under Labour's privatisation schemes.

The Tory letter also showed how close the UK is coming to the US system, where businesses regularly support both parties simultaneously. Lord Chadlington, aka Peter Gummer, brother of former minister John and founder of lobbying firm Shandwick, signed up to the Tory letter to the *Telegraph*. He has sold his stake in Shandwick and moved on, but not before hiring "new" Labour wonk Colin Byrne. The same Colin Byrne was one of the staff who put together the Labour-supporting letter to the *Times!*

Thatcher's old advertising guru Lord (Tim) Bell was also prominent among the Tory letter writers. However, Labour's Dave Hill, of Bell Pottinger, a subsidiary of Bell's firm Chime Communciations, has also returned to Labour during the election.

HOW PARLIAMENT WORKS

A GOOD example of "new" Labour's scorn for Parliament – not to mention its cockiness over the size of its majority – was seen in the Commons on 12 March in discussions over the criminal justice and police bill.

Then, the government was still trying to clear the decks for a May election and was falling over its own timetable. For a grim moment it looked as if there wouldn't be time for the report stage of the bill, and the whole shooting match might have fallen as a result.

In the event, an extraordinary emergency motion was introduced by the leader of the House, Margaret Beckett. The text was as follows:

"The Bill shall be deemed to have been reported to the House, as amended by the Committee, as if those clauses and schedules the consideration of which had not been completed by the committee had been ordered to stand part of the bill... with the outstanding amendments which stood on the order paper in the name of [home office minister] Mr Charles Clarke."

This motion, described by the speaker as "without precedent", was debated late into the night of 12 March. At a quarter past one in the morning Tory backbencher Richard Shepherd rose to oppose it. He made the rather obvious point that the House was being asked to "deem" something had happened when it hadn't.

"We are now telling ourselves that we are redundant," he said. "If every minister can deem, with a majority behind him, that something has happened, we can cut out the process of debate and transfer the business to the other end of the palace." It was no use. For the first time in its history the Commons proceeded by a majority of 98 (240-142) to "deem" that a bill had passed when it hadn't and that a minister's amendments had been discussed and passed when they hadn't.

THOSE on the left of the Conservative party have been shocked to discover that the Dirty Dozen, a Tory dining group which meets regularly at the Commonwealth Club, is in fact a pro-Portillo caucus.

The Dozen, including Stephen Dorrell's adviser Lewis Robinson and prospective parliamentary candidate for Watford Michael McManus — both former members of the SDP — believe that the party's future lies in a deal by which Dorrell supports Portillo's bid for the Tory leadership in return for the post of shadow chancellor.

DEFECTION from the Tories to "new" Labour, Shaun Woodward-style, is not the only switch for parliamentary candidates standing in this election.

In a previous incarnation Mohammed Riaz, the Conservative candidate for Bradford West and an advisor to William Hague on race issues, was a Labour councillor and a political visitor to Communist East Germany.

In the mid 1980s Riaz visited the German Democratic Republic (GDR), then under the leadership of Erich Honecker, with a party from the Bradford branch of the Great Britain/ GDR Friendship Society. He was given the full treatment reserved for "friends" of the GDR — tea and cakes at the East German parliament, breakfast at the top of Berlin's television tower, and a sight few of the GDR's citizens ever saw without risking a bullet in the back: a close-up view of the Berlin Wall. At a farewell dinner he was fulsome in his praise of the GDR's, er, achievements.

THE Hinduja brothers are free to travel again and are expected to leave India shortly for Britain so they can renew fond acquaintances with their many friends in the Labour party.

An analysis of the Commons register of members' interests shows what a popular destination India now is for MPOFS – that is, MPs on freebies.

Twelve MPs travelled in two 10-day trips in February and September/October last year courtesy of the newly-formed Labour Friends of India. They were: Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford); Linda Perham (Ilford North); Barry Gardiner (Brent North); Joseph Benton (Bootle); Anthony Colman (Putney); Claire Curtis-Thomas (Crosby); Jennifer Jones (Wolverhampton South West); Ashok Kumar (Middlesborough South East); Keith Darvill (Upmister); Ian Davidson (Glasgow Pollok); Frank Doran (Aberdeen Central); and Gareth Thomas (Harrow West).

The Indian government picked up the tab for accommodation, but flights were paid for by "various British Indian companies and individuals". These firms are not separately named, but G.P. Hinduja hosted a dinner at St James's Hotel for one of the returning groups of MPs.

EVERY MP wants to appeal to first time voters in the run up to a general election, and Colin Burgon, who is hoping to be reelected as the Labour MP for the Leeds constituency of Elmet, is no exception.

Burgon's campaign leaflet features a quote from a young constituent, Elinor Blakely, who says: "As a young person, voting for the first time in a general election, I want to be represented by an MP who listens to my concerns... I've checked it out and I'll be voting for Colin Burgon."

The leaflet fails to mention, however, whether she checked it out with the help of her father, Ian Blakely, who just happens to be Burgon's electoral agent.

AFTER the news broke that Martin Bell was standing as an independent candidate in the Essex constituency of Brentwood and Ongar because of allegations that the local Conservative party had been infiltrated by members of a Pentecostal church, the religious website Xalt published an interview with the leader of the Penial Pentecostal Church, Bishop Michael Reid.

In the interview Bishop Reid compared Bell and his supporters to the Nazi party, stating: "Listening to Martin Bell and his cronies you'd think we'd all need to wear a yellow star, and we were excluded from business, from politics, from everything because we're Christians. It smacks of one of the most spiteful, hateful things that ever hit this century; it's called Nazism."

Such extreme comments on a vital local issue would normally make the headlines in the local press, but for some reason the main newspaper in the area, the *Brentwood Gazette*, decided not to report Bishop Reid's statements even after Bell's campaign team brought them to the editor's attention.

The editor Roger Watkins told the Eye that he decided not to cover a story which other local media happily picked up on, because he was conducting an exclusive interview with Bishop Reid the following day. He denied that he was in any way influenced by the fact that his wife, Carol Watkins, is development director at the St Francis Hospice, a charitable institution which has received more than £5,000 in donations from the Penial Pentecostal Church.

LAW and order was the Tories' theme of the day when Ann Widdecombe toured Yorkshire and descended on the Bradford home of burglary victim Pam McCullam for a well-attended photocall.

After sipping home-made elderberry wine with her bewildered host, Widdecombe launched into an attack on Labour for providing too few police, and moved on to her next engagement closely pursued by the press pack.

Had the assembled hacks actually bothered to hang around and speak to Mrs McCullam, they would have discovered that she was not exactly the classic victim of burglary as presented in Tory handouts. In fact, her house had been broken into by someone who mistakenly thought his friend still lived there. Disturbing certainly – but he left without stealing anything and Mrs McCullam even praised police for their speedy response.

But why let the facts get in the way of a bit of sloganising?

MARY WALLACE, Lib Dem candidate for Stockton North, is taking an unusual approach to campaigning in her potential constituency: she isn't doing any.

She has told the local party that she won't have time to visit the patch because she's "too busy with other things". As she only lives about 20 minutes' drive away in Durham, some local party workers who fancied the nomination are a bit miffed.

In the unlikely event that she becomes Mary Wallace MP, she won't even be around to hear the announcement: she's booked a holiday and will be out of the country on 7 June.

ACCUSATIONS are flying round the north of Scotland constituency of Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross that the outgoing Lib Dem MP Robert Maclennan has foisted a member of the landed gentry upon voters.

Maclennan's Lib Dem successor is John, Viscount Thurso, the Savoy group director and MD of Champney's health spa. He is standing as a commoner now that he has been booted out of the House of Lords.

In a topsy-turvy state of affairs, Thurso's Tory opponent is a working gamekeeper, Robbie Rowantree, whose father, Torlough Rowantree, was head gamekeeper on the Thurso estate in the days of the last viscount.

GUS ROBINSON, the Tory candidate standing against Peter Mandelson in Hartlepool, has managed to upset the local business community without trying too hard.

He rushed out a postcard to every home in the constituency proclaiming his virtues — including his support for local business. Local printers were none too pleased to see that the card was marked "printed in Mansfield". A director of one local printing firm is Brenda Pearson, who's also a Conservative councillor in the town. Perhaps Gus should ring Mandy for advice on how to nurture business relationships.

70-80-90 SEATS...

FFION WHAT A SCORCHER!

NOOKS and CORNERS

MORNSEY Central Hospital began life as the Hornsey Cottage Hospital, one of those small and friendly institutions that have become anathema to the centralising bureaucrats of the NHS.

The original modest building *(pictured)*, in Park Road, Hornsey, was built in 1907-10 and designed by George Lethbridge in a suitably cottagey style — rather in the tile-hung and half-timbered manner of that master of the friendly vernacular, Norman Shaw. Later additions included a war memorial building and the Southwood ward, built as recently as 1991 at a cost of £1m or so to make the Hornsey Central a 45-bed hospital.

Now all this is to be demolished to make way for 56 units of sheltered housing and a new health centre. This will be built by the Anchor Housing Trust with the support of Barnet, Enfield & Haringey health authority and the social services and housing departments of Haringey council, whose planning committee has now obligingly approved the scheme.

Perhaps the hospital has to go, although it has served the people of Hornsey — who paid for it by voluntary contributions — well for almost a century. Furthermore, 400 local residents have signed a petition objecting to the demolition of the old hospital and to the size and shape of the new development.

The architects at Hunter & Partners propose to replace Lethbridge's original building by three-storey blocks of flats of impressively banal design. If these architects were any good, of course, they could have tried to restore and incorporate the old cottage hospital into their scheme, thereby giving a sense of continuity and perhaps responding creatively to its scale and admirably suburban character in the design of the new buildings.

But that approach requires thought, care and reticence – virtues which would never have elicited the praise of Haringey council's planning committee for the "quality, vision and sensitivity of their design solution". And as for the bureaucrats and politicians who have made the modern monster hospital a place to enter with well-founded apprehension and dread, nobody ever got promoted by proposing a modest compromise.

WHILE we are in Hornsey, there is the Queen's Hotel in Broadway Parade, Crouch End, to worry about too. The Queen's dates from 1899-1901 and was built and designed by a most enterprising builder, John Cathles Hill.

With its original tilework, metalwork, internal joinery and particularly fine stained-glass windows — all touched by the contemporary taste for the art nouveau — this large and lavish pub remains splendid. And, unlike poor old Hornsey Cottage Hospital, the Queen's Hotel is listed, at grade II.

It also stars in the classic study of Victorian Pubs by Mark Girouard, who notes that the decorative windows were provided by Messrs Cakebread, Robey & Co., whose "Art Nouveau masterpieces are the stained glass windows at the Queen's, Crouch End, where fronds and flowers in brilliant colours leap, whirl and rotate across the big arched windows looking out towards the Broadway".

In recent decades this pub has been badly treated, but it could perfectly well be restored to bring back its opulent, decorative Victorian character — the best possible environment for selling beer, as any sensible landlord knows. But this is not to be. Messrs Scottish & Newcastle have applied for planning permission to alter the interior to make part of it into a pizza parlour, to install an extractor flue to enhance the exterior and — incredibly — to replace the glorious windows by clear glass.

One can only assume charitably that such asinine vandalism reflects mere stupidity rather than sharp commercial acumen. Girouard noted that the Queen's, together with Hill's other masterpiece, the Salisbury in Green Lanes, are "a wonderful pair of pubs, which worthily round off the century and deserve to be better known". More to the point, they deserve to be better looked after. All too often the listing of pubs is not taken seriously enough, yet — at their best — they are as important and enjoyable and much more useful than country houses. I trust Scottish & Newcastle's planning application will be treated with the contempt it deserves.

'Piloti'

AD NAUSEAM ELECTION UPDATE

LABOUR just will not rest from its merciless flogging of that entirely dead horse, the film poster pastiche.

Another pair of tiresome burlesques now graces Britain's hoardings, one a horror story called "The Repossessed", the other a disaster flick named – those with fragile sides should look away now – "Towering Interest Rates". The none-too-tacit suggestion is that Hague and Portillo are scary ghouls, or arsonists, who are here to ruin all the good work that lovely Labour has only just begun.

Aside from being an unoriginal and wholly unamusing wheeze (and *Eye* readers will not be surprised to learn that this seemingly endless supply of lemons is spawn of advertising "genius" Trevor Beattie), it also signals a new tack for political advertising, in as much as Labour is having a laugh. It's no secret that Millbank regards 7 June as a Blair shoo-in – why not have a bit of fun with the marketing budget?

Another recent advertising stunt, giving out scratchcards to first-time voters which then link to pop videos on the Labour website, suggests that light-hearted Labour marketeers are having a whale of a time. They must be hoping the Reverend hasn't yet chanced upon a recent survey that said only 10 percent of the electorate takes any notice of political advertising: after this crop, one can see why.

THE Tories, meanwhile, lurch from crisis to crisis: not content with undermining their own campaign with internecine squabbling over race, asylum seekers and Europe, they've now fallen out with their ad agency, minnows Yellow M.

Unheard of before the Tories plucked them from the *Yellow Pages*, cynics suggested that Smith Square couldn't afford a more established agency, and so opted for a cheapy whipping boy. Adland insiders said Yellow M were mad to accept such a poisoned chalice, especially as it came with several poisonous people who were always going to think they knew better when it came to ad strategy.

In truth not even the Tories thought Yellow M would be up to the task, contacting at least two large London agencies in secret in the last five months to see if they'd be interested. Neither would touch the Tories with a bargepole – good admen know when a product is a dud.

But to add to Yellow M's woes, it now transpires that their latest poster – featuring a pregnant Blair and the tag "It's been four years and he still hasn't delivered" – was conceived by a school leaver on work experience at Saatchi & Saatchi.

Cheeky scamp Mark Rowbotham sent his idea (which in turn was nicked from a classic Saatchi family planning ad in the Sixties) direct to William Hague, who rather liked it and demanded Yellow M get it made up. It appears that anyone who's game can have a go at being Tory election party strategist for a day. Suggestions for the next Tory poster should be sent to W. Hague... along with any ideas for a new career come 7 June.

TV

Survivor (ITV)
Big Brother 2 (Channel 4)

THE Hollywood screenwriter William Goldman is celebrated for the observation that, in filmmaking: "Nobody knows anything." By this, he means that apparently surefire hits mysteriously fail while certain turkeys suddenly take flight at the box office. In the last week, commercial television in Britain has been learning Goldman rules.

With the elimination game-show **Survivor**, which is *Lord Of The Flies* with real people in bikinis, ITV took the format of America's biggest television hit of last year and entrusted what's known in telly-land as the "reversioning" to the producer of British TV's biggest hit of recent times: Nigel Lythgoe, who made *Popstars*. The only argument between third channel executives was exactly which bank they'd be laughing all the way to. Couldn't fail, mate. Couldn't fail.

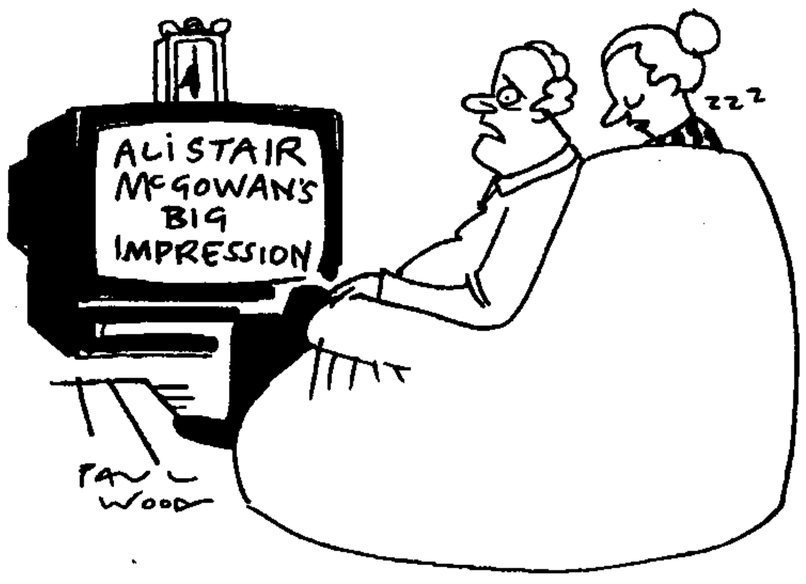
It has. The biggest reason, as with so many ITV flops, is that they don't trust the material or the audience. As Channel 4's *Big Brother* and the American version of *Survivor* showed, the trick in reality TV is that you have to risk boredom. The long stretches in which the observation of the competitors approaches the tedium of real life are the moments which lead to the scenes of greatest excitement.

Even fast-cut American primetime TV slowed itself down for *Survivor*. The sequence in which the American castaways ate live bugs was probably the longest, slowest take ever seen on the networks. In ITV's *Survivor*, they keep moving on before you've got to know the characters.

The second drawback is that reality TV at its best (in, for example, the first series of Channel 4's *Big Brother*) gives the through-the-keyhole sensation that we're watching events next door even as they take place.

Big Brother was either live or edited on the day of transmission and was permanently live on the internet. *Survivor* is all past-tense: a set of cassettes on an executive's desk. The islanders have been back in England for weeks now. This is pre-packaged TV in which there's no possibility of inter-action with the audience.

The look and feel of *Survivor* is also wrong. *Big Brother* cleverly took its visual qualities from CCTV: electronic eavesdropping on people who often didn't realise the cameras were there, with the kind of down-beat northern voice-over you get in documentary series about council rat-catchers.



"He can't do comedy"

In contrast, *Survivor* is as camp and glossy as *It's A Knock-Out* with a lot of bollocks involving "tribal council" and the symbolic extinguishing of flaming brands which represent an individual's life on the island. The obvious host for this sort of malarkey is Graham Norton but, with a contradictory thrust towards seriousness, the presenter is the ITN sobersides Mark Austin.

The single consolation for ITV as it watches the planned cash-cow succumbing to ratings-BSE is that the second series of **Big Brother** on Channel 4 is also stumbling. The message here is that reality TV, unlike sex, is better the less you know about it.

The power of both *BB1* and *Celebrity Big Brother* was that the participants didn't know what they were letting themselves in for. Even during transmission, they didn't fully comprehend what it meant to be watched for 24 hours a day. If Nick Bateman and Vanessa Feltz could somehow have seen tapes of themselves before they started, they'd never have taken part.

The crucial difference with *Survivor* and *BB2* is that those taking part have seen *BB1* and *CBB*. This history of the genre visibly affects their behaviour on camera. These are people who know they are being watched and take precautions of manner and action in accordance with that knowledge. The most bizarre example of this is that the first person voted off the *Survivor* island was a toffish tosser called Nick.

The only hope for ITV and Channel 4 is that, by their very nature, these formats are most interesting in the later stages, when the characters and dynamics are established. The happy memories which viewers and critics have of *Big Brother* and *Celebrity Big Brother* relate to their final days. We've forgotten that the start of both had reviewers reaching almost unanimously for metaphors involving fresh paint ceasing to be wet. Perhaps that cycle is happening again.

I fear, though, that we've simply seen too much. It's always been a curse of television that the medium tends so quickly towards self-parody and knowing reference. The process is now happening to reality TV where the locked room is suddenly full of mirrors.

'Square Eyes'

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

Little John Prescott

HUNTING THE JAYBOTHAM

LABOUR's Keith Vaz and Sean Woodward, not to mention the Tories' Oliver Letwin are not the only invisible men of this election campaign. The BBC's Sir Peter Jay, its economics editor, has also seemed strangely elusive.

Given the party political spats over income tax, VAT and national insurance ceilings, voters might have expected elucidation from the great man. But he has been strangely silent. Indeed, on Radio 4's *World at One* last week, Nick Clarke even introduced Chris Childs of the *Financial Times* as "our in-house economics expert".

BBC staffers say the handsomely salaried Jaybotham, a capricious former Washington ambassador, doesn't like to bother with tiresome broadcasting, preferring to sit by the phone waiting for the call from the FO offering another posting. It might be quite a wait.

DUMB BRITAIN

Dog Eat Dog, BBC1
Ulrika Jonsson: Shakespeare: in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* which character assumed the head of an ass?
Contestant: Macbeth.
Jonsson: Which US president was shot in 1981?
Contestant: J. F. Kennedy.

Steve Wright in the Afternoon, Radio 2
Question: In England it's called "petrol". What is it called in the United States?
Answer: Diesel.

THAT'S INNOVATIVE...
THEY'VE BEEN PAID £1 MILLION EACH FOR A SHOW THAT BREAKS NEW GROUND...
SLAP BANG
PUSHES BACK THE BOUNDARIES...
AND COMES UP WITH THE PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT IMPOSSIBLE...
BY MAKING NOEL EDMONDS LOOK GOOD
SLAP BANG
Kenfyre

GOING LIVE

BBC News 24's anchor Gavin Estler went live on 16 May to Rhyl to ask an "eye-witness" about John Prescott's violent encounter with a protestor.

"I couldn't actually see anything," came the unhelpful reply before viewers were returned to the studio.

At least the eyewitness was somewhere near the scene. Unlike reporter David Williams who was interviewed live by the BBC's *News at Ten*: "Well, I wasn't actually there, but I've spoken to many who were, including the cameraman."

THERE are a number of important items permanently stored on the BBC's DCart system – a digital recordings store – in case of a sudden death or important breaking story.

Currently there are obituaries of Ted Heath and Barbara Castle waiting in the wings, alongside something called "Vaz Obit", curiously protected by an embargo.

There's also a package titled "Widdecombe political obit". Nothing about William Hague as yet... but it can only be a matter of time.

BBC hacks attach helpful descriptions of potential interviewees to their computerised contact lists – and very interesting these descriptions can be sometimes.

Peter Oborne at the *Express*, for example, "can be a bit grumpy", while his paper is a "mess on the political line". *Daily Telegraph* political correspondent Sarah Womack is "good on women" if nothing else, while her editor Charles Moore "needs serious de-umming" – a technical procedure designed to remove the impression of dithering and indecision in speech.

Michael Gove (*Times*) is "right wing"; Tom Utley (*DTel*) is "very right wing"; while Eben Black, political correspondent at the *Sunset Times* has "gone Labour".

Spare a thought, though, for poor Peter Kellner. He is simply described as "dull".

JUST FANCY THAT!

BBC Radio 1's *Newsbeat* will be in London as part of our election coverage to interview Tony Blair, leader of the Conservative Party. We are looking for first time voters to come along to a venue in London on Tuesday 5th June. This is a chance for you to put your questions to Mr Blair about issues which you feel are important...

— Invitation to attend election debate on Radio 1

11.15 ITV News At Ten; (T) Weather

The Guide, Grauniad

LINING herself up for this year's Anthea Turner Prize for Most Annoying Publicity Stunt is the "elfin" television presenter's sister, Wendy Turner-Webster.

Animal-lover Wendy recently wrote to the Duke of Kent in his capacity as President of the Scout Association, asking him to drop the Scout's angler proficiency badge because it promotes the killing of and cruelty to fish, and copied the letter to the national press.

The *Daily Express* picked the story up with an emotive article entitled: "Stop killing fish, Wendy begs scouts". Had Ms Turner-Webster or the *Daily Sexpress* bothered to do a little basic research, they would have discovered that far from killing fish, the Scouts' angling badge, which is sponsored by the Environment Agency, requires boys to learn how to handle fish and release them with care, and to know who to inform if they see poaching, pollution or fish in distress.

Ms Turner-Webster was writing on behalf of an organisation called People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). While PETA strongly opposes the breeding of animals for domestic pets, and is against horse-breeding, Wendy Turner-Webster presents the Channel 4 programme *Pet Rescue*, and lists horse-riding among her hobbies.

GASH AND GARRY

MOST guests at Garry Bushell's launch party for his first novel, *The Face*, were tabloid hacks or sarf Londoners pretending to be gangsters — or both, in the case of Piers "Morgan" Moron, who went into his now customary routine of issuing Mafia-style threats against his enemies and challenging *Sun* editor David Yelland to a fight. The wimpish Yelland scuttled away from the party soon afterwards, looking miserable.

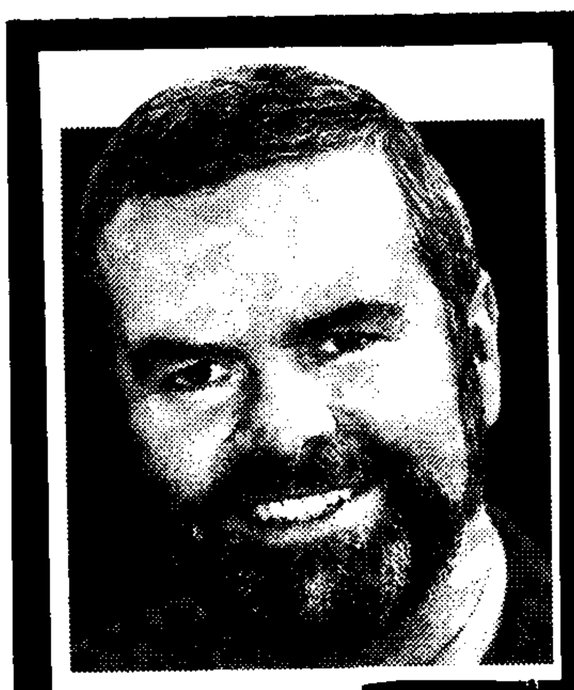
And no wonder.

The two main characters in the novel are both alternative personae of our Garry. There's Harry Tyler, a swearing, shagging, wise-cracking undercover cop who represents the triumph of law'n'order — a concept dear to Bushell's heart. And there's Johnny Too, who despite being a major-league thug and drug-dealer is also a swearing, shagging, wise-cracking guy and therefore a Diamond Geezer.

So if both the main men in this third-rate potboiler are heroes, where's the villain? The answer comes as early as chapter two, when Johnny is chewing the fat with his bruvver, Pyro Joe. "Know what I hate about Page Three now?" he asks. "They've done away with the funny captions. You don't just wanna see a picture, you wanna know what the bird does for a living, what she likes on telly. Y'know, 'Kelly from Leytonstone, 19, works in fish shop', so you're thinking, Works in a fish shop, does she? I'd serve her up a portion." (Johnny's sparkling wit is then interrupted, alas, by his urgent need to beat up a Kosovan squeegee-merchant who has the diabolical liberty to wash his windscreen. "Why don't you bunch of mongrels fuck off back to your own shithole country instead of poncing off us?" he yells while kicking the man's head in. "What the fuck are you seeking asylum from? EH? Fucking soap by the stench of yer.")

In short, the whole book is like an extended Garry Bushell column, with all the charming obsessions and prejudices that his readers know so well. But it is also a head-butting attack on the wimpy "new" Labour *Sun* created by David Yelland. For instance, the sight of Lorraine Kelly on GMTV arouses such intense fury among Johnny's associates ("Fuck me, the Paisley Pig!... Her vibrator has to wear a blindfold... Get that beast off the screen") that one of them shoots out the TV set. Can it have slipped Bushell's mind that Lorraine Kelly has been hired by David Yelland to write a Saturday column for the *Sun*?

In case his bosses missed the point, Garry gave an interview to the London *Evening Standard* two weeks ago. "The *Sun* is a different creature now," the Sage of Sidcup grumbled, reminiscing about its glory days under Kelvin MacKenzie. "Dante's *Inferno* then, Sleepy Hollow now." Yelland was so alarmed that he got his factotum Chris Roycroft-Davis to ring Bushell



'Monkey Man' terror hits city

Mirror 17 May

and ask if he was planning any more interviews. Not immediately, came the none-too-reassuring reply.

So why does Garry stay at the Currant Bun? In the *Standard* article he denied that he had been tempted to join his chum Richard Desmond over at the Express group. "I admire Richard's drive, but if you play for Manchester United, why move to Crystal Palace?" In fact, however, Garry was sorely tempted earlier this year when Desmond offered him a salary not unadjacent to £300,000 to defect to the *Daily Star*. Yelland kept him at Wapping with a huge pay-rise and a promise that the *Sun* would throw its full weight behind his novel.

But that was before Yelland had actually read *The Face*. Around Wapping it is assumed that the prudish editor was horrified by the amount of fucking and whacking in the book, not to mention the ill-concealed swipes at his editorial policy. Hence the remarkable lack of promotional features about the novel in the *Sun*. Bushell has had more coverage in Desmond's *OK*! magazine (or indeed the *South London Press*) than in his own newspaper. Contrast that with the VIP treatment given by Yelland to Richard Littlejohn's first novel this week — huge serialisation, daily front-page puffs, leader-page articles by Frederick Forsyth ordering all *Sun* readers to buy the book at once — and you'll see why poor old Garry is a very bitter Bushell indeed. The great Beardie v. Baldie battle is not over yet.

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

RUMOURS that a new Labour government would sack not just the culture secretary Chris Smith but his entire department, scattering its functions to the wind, are bad news for music administrators already wondering where to address their next begging letters after the showdown between the Arts Council of England and its 10 regional arts boards.

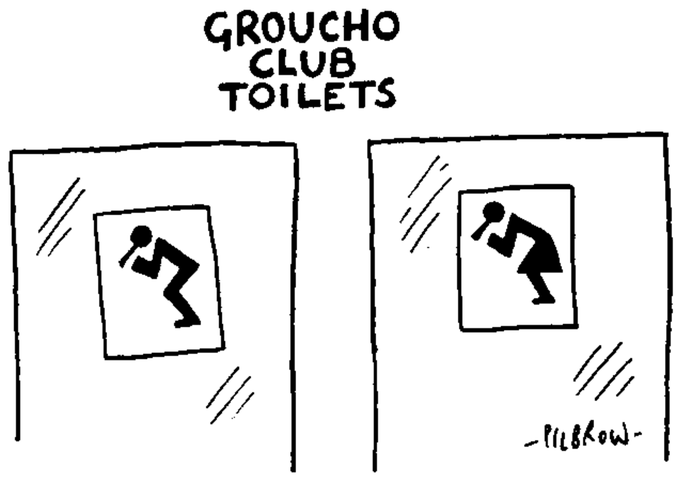
Officially the boards no longer exist: by order from London, they were supposed to have fallen on their swords and surrendered their assets to the ACE by the beginning of this month. But most of them have taken to rebellion and refused, arguing that they know better than anyone in London how to serve the interests of their localities; and that they are charities and, as such, can only lawfully pass on their assets to a body with the same objectives — which they claim the national ACE is not. At the same time the boards are busily canvassing home-ground support for their survival.

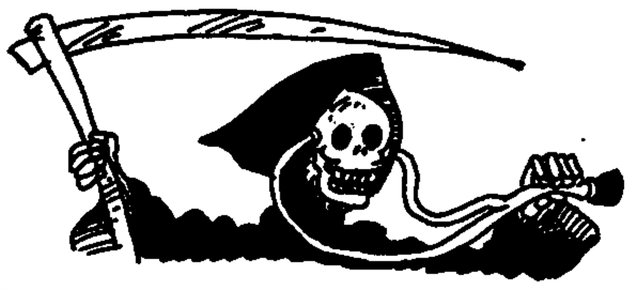
But the truth is that not all their local constituents would be sad to see them go. In fact in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight there would be rejoicing. A few years ago Southern Arts decided to axe the Bournemouth Sinfonietta: a small, unglamorous but hard-working ensemble whose touring programmes brought music to parts of the south coast that otherwise got next to nothing. The decision was unpopular and acrimonious. And when the Sinfonietta refused to die, regrouping itself as an ad hoc band to struggle on without public funding, Southern Arts got very angry — realising that every future Sinfonietta concert would be cause for embarrassment.

But just *how* embarrassed Southern Arts remains by the continued existence of the Sinfonietta only came to light after a request for funding by the Isle of Wight Oboe Festival which took place earlier this month. A modest but respectable event run under the aegis of Lady Barbirolli, widow of the great conductor, the festival had applied for help towards its £35,000 operating costs. After a long wait it was turned down, in a letter that gave three reasons for the refusal. The first two reasons were comparatively insubstantial. The third — the one that obviously counted — was that the festival had booked the Sinfonietta to accompany its final concert.

Face-saving is one thing, but to be so dedicated to the death of an orchestra that you penalise any organisation that befriends it is positively vindictive. And a bad move, you might think, for a regional arts board whose own future hangs in the balance.

`Lunchtime O'Boulez'





DOING THE ROUNDS

WHY has "new" Labour abandoned its interest in NHS standards in favour of more simplistic election promises?

In its 1999 white paper "A First Class Service. Quality in the New NHS", ex-health secretary Frank Dobson pledged to remove the gross variations in the quality of service. But Tony "a hospital a day" Blair now seems content just to trumpet his extra resources (allegedly thousands more nurses and doctors, and more money for heart and cancer services) while ignoring the issue of variable standards. Indeed, the approach seems to be that the best way to avoid unacceptable variations is not to measure them at all.

Six years after the Bristol child heart surgery disaster ended and three years after Dobson announced an as yet unpublished public inquiry to be completed "within a reasonable period so that they [the parents] can make a new start in their lives", there are still no defined safe standards for children having heart surgery. This, despite Dobson's promise that "the government are not going to wait for the outcome of the inquiry before taking action to put in place new machinery for setting and maintaining clinical standards in the national service."

A logical starting point would have been to oblige any centre performing heart surgery to collect and publish its results. Hardly rocket science, but new Labour hasn't even managed this. At present, the only cardiac units who have been flushed out into the open are Bristol and Alder Hey. Any guesses why?

To be fair the Bristol unit was planning to go public before the shit hit the fan in 1995, and its latest adult heart surgery audit, written by surgeon Alan J Bryan, is commendably honest. "The most noteworthy aspect of the last 12 months has been the 11 percent reduction in the number of procedures performed. The local difficulties which resulted in the reduction – shortage of theatre staff and intensive care facilities – are reflected nationally. The shortfall has lead to longer waiting times, less effective treatment of urgent cases and multiple cancellations. This in turn has resulted in increased pressures and frustration for already overworked staff."

Despite this, the Bristol unit has turned out excellent results for the fourth year running and has used only a fraction of its budget to collect and analyse the data. So why aren't all heart surgery units following suit? As one heart surgeon put it: "No other unit publishes their results in this way. They are terrified that if a precedent is set, they may have to present results which are not so good. So they sweep the Bristol audit under the carpet and don't acknowledge it because they know if they do they will have to replicate it. This of course shows the general level of protectionism and stupidity that still exists."

The government's response has been to allow heart surgery units to carry on doing their own thing, expecting them to analyse their own performance under the new rules of "clinical governance" but refusing to ring fence funding for it and not insisting on publication. Meanwhile, the department of health has convened a paediatric cardiac services review committee that has met and been sworn to confidentiality, and has no published membership or minutes (Eyes passim). It was exactly this departmental secrecy that allowed the Bristol unit of old to flourish.

Perhaps the most depressing element is that heart surgery is still way ahead of other specialties in terms of data collection. Follow Mr Blair into any hospital and ask a surgeon how many of a particular operation he does, what his results are and how they compare to the national average and you'll be met with another blank stare. Far easier to waffle on about 20,000 virtual nurses.

M.D.

"...and she says I never take her anywhere"

DOWN ON THE FARM

AT LEAST two separate scandals have combined to turn the official handling of the foot and mouth disease (FMD) epidemic into an historic disgrace.

The first, since the day at the end of April when the spin doctors took over running the crisis and Prof Anderson produced his famous graph showing that the epidemic would be over on 7 June, has been the quite astonishing sleight of hand by which the Maffia has been fiddling its published figures.

Every conceivable trick has been used to keep the daily figure of "confirmed outbreaks" down to the lowest possible level. Much of the massive slaughter continuing in the north of England, south Wales and elsewhere has been hidden away under categories such as "slaughtered on suspicion" and "contiguous cull" no longer shown on the Maffia website.

In the second week of May when the daily headline figure first briefly hit "zero", dutifully reported by the media, the ministry was in fact killing more than 200,000 animals on 889 farms, a rate of slaughter as high as in mid-March when the crisis was at its height.

The other major scandal, only just emerging, has been the colossal scale on which the Maffia has been breaking the law, as its officials and employees have ridden roughshod over just about every animal welfare and environmental rule in the book. Literally millions of healthy animals have been killed under the "contiguous cull" scheme without any legal authorisation under the Animal Health Act, which only permits killing of animals which are diseased.

Horror stories have poured in from every affected area of the country, describing how the killing of animals has been conducted in flagrant breach of every conceivable welfare law. Pigs have been blasted with shot guns, cattle have been repeatedly shot at and missed with rifles, lambs drowned in streams, piglets beaten to death with shovels etc, etc. Every single instance constitutes a criminal offence under the laws of the land, and normally the Maffia would be only to quick to frogmarch all those responsible into the nearest courtroom to face a string of serious criminal charges. Yet when the Maffia itself is responsible for such acts of barbarity, for some reason the law is suspended. We have been living through a strange nightmare, and one which is far from over.

● BACK in March 17 haulage companies were approached by the Maffia and asked to make their large articulated trucks available for transporting hundreds of thousands of dead animals to FMD burial sites.

The firms were given a clear verbal assurance that, so long as they observed strict "biosecurity" rules, there would be nothing to stop them, once the contracts were completed, from redeploying their vehicles back to normal business, transporting grain and foodstuffs.

The firms took pains to adapt their artics to ensure maximum biosecurity, gave their drivers special training and set about their grisly task. Their first surprise was to see the Maffia's own employees seemingly ignoring every biosecurity rule, wandering freely on and off farms without bothering to disinfect. Even worse, in April, their contracts were all simultaneously terminated, and the firms were now told that there could be no question of their vehicles being permitted to transport grain or foodstuffs at any time in the future. This flagrant breach of the earlier promise threatened all 17 companies with bankruptcy. When the Road Haulage Association protested to the Maffia in the strongest terms, it was promised an early meeting to discuss the matter. Three weeks later, despite repeated approaches to the ministry, there has been no further response.

'Even Newer Muckspreader'

SIGNAL FAILURES

Railways? What railways?

THOUGH Railtrack has declared a loss of £534m and asked for another £2bn from the government to wash down its recent £1.5bn bailout, hitherto none of the political parties has seemed keen to debate the railways during the election campaign. Why not?

The absence of debate might be related to the culpability of both Labour and the Tories in the current mess — and of course the intention of neither of them to do anything about it if elected.

On the rare occasions Labour politicians are forced to comment on trains, the stock reply is that the crisis stems not from the structure of the industry but the historic lack of investment. That pins the blame on the Tories, excuses Labour's inaction over restructuring and leads neatly to a reprise of Labour's plan for £60bn to be spent on railways over 10 years (a large chunk of it on the Channel tunnel link, which will be irrelevant to most passengers).

That reply implies that once the rail industry has the cash everything will work properly. But the industry has swallowed many billions in public money since 1992 when the Major government embarked on privatisation. Some train operators have swollen their coffers by increasing train fares (*Eyes passim*) which were already among the highest in Europe. The industry has had more money than British Rail had in its last decade but has little to show for it besides a struggling network that lags far behind the rest of Europe in reliability and automatic train protection.

Labour's strategic rail authority (SRA) costs £16m a year to run (more than the combined subsidy for Chiltern Railways, GNER and West Anglia Great Northern). It employs 350 pen-pushers and a horde of well-paid directors but has yet to produce anything resembling a strategy.

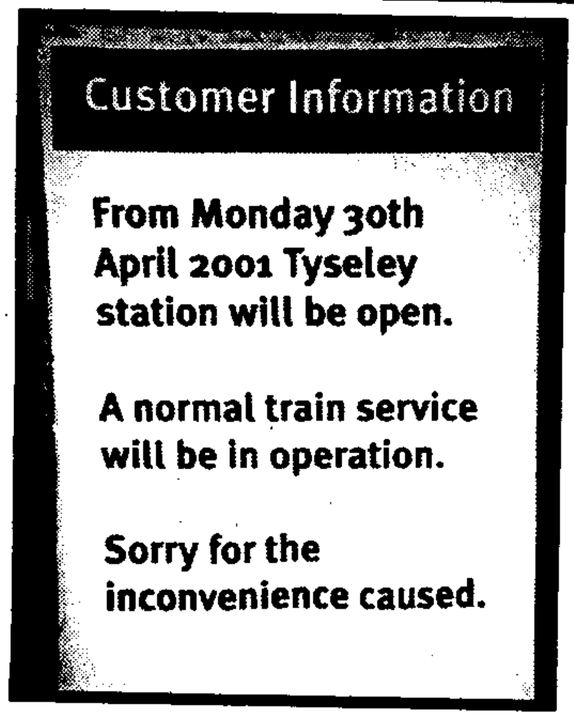
The SRA's fudged franchising process (*Eyes passim*) is wasting public and private money, the latter lavished on bids to second-guess the SRA's desires instead of helping to improve services now. Labour intends to bring even more snouts to the trough by inviting investment consortia to handle major projects (*Eye* 1024).

This convoluted structure will supposedly encourage private investors to provide most of the promised £60bn for railways. But without massive handouts from the public, Railtrack would lack the resources to maintain the network, let alone correct the historic under-investment of which Labour complains.

Such is the nature of Labour's beloved public-private partnerships that Railtrack passed on nearly 10 percent of its £1.5bn advance to shareholders in the form of a dividend, despite its disastrous financial performance. Railtrack's primary duty is to its shareholders — who do not include the government.

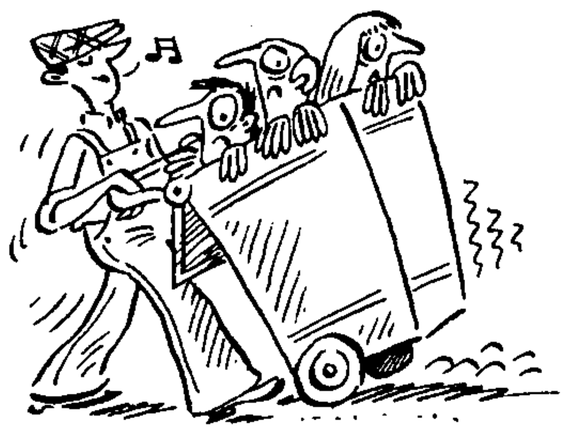
If the government really wants to end under-investment in railways, it has to exert some control over the money it pumps through Railtrack's life-support machine. That means renationalising Railtrack and taking responsibility for the network. Since that isn't going to happen (except perhaps in the unlikely event of a Lib-Lab coalition being formed), rail passengers should expect to see billions more shunted into the pockets of shareholders, parent groups, bureaucrats, lawyers and consultants regardless of the state of the railway during the next parliament.

'Dr B. Ching'


Customer Information
From Monday 30th April 2001 Tyseley station will be open.
A normal train service will be in operation.
Sorry for the inconvenience caused.

Snow Hill Station, Birmingham

ROTTEN BOROUGHS



RACE FOR THE TOP

ONE of Ken Livingstone's first acts on taking office as London mayor was to appoint his old friend Lee Jasper as his adviser on racial matters.

Jasper is what is termed a "race guru": former secretary of the black-led equality think-tank the 1990 Trust, and secretary of the National Assembly Against Racism (NAAR). Since he started work at the GLA's Romney House, a number of recruitment consultancy contracts worth a "commercially confidential" six-figure sum have been awarded to Mann-Weaver, a company co-owned by another "race guru", David Weaver.

Weaver happens to be the current chair of the 1990 Trust and also the vice-chair of NAAR. Jasper and Weaver go back more than 10 years to their time together in the National Black Caucus.

Oddly, the GLA, which has strict rules about contract procurement, apparently does not have "a clear paper trail on that contract". Its director of corporate resources, Manny Lewis, says: "My feeling was that there was a procurement exercise of some sort. But I have not got a spec that deals with all the tendering procedures and outcomes."

Lee Jasper tells the *Eye* he finds the absence of documentation "appalling". He denies having had any involvement in the procurement process himself. Seeing as there doesn't appear to have been one, we can safely take his word for that.

MILLER'S TALE

MARTIN WARSAMA, the Doncaster social worker and Unison official accused of the heinous crime of "leaking sensitive information" to a local newspaper, has received a "final warning" at a disciplinary hearing.

His alleged crime was to leak information relating to Donny social services' decision to send a 13-year-old "at risk" boy alone on a train back to his sex-abuser father in Newcastle (*Eyes* 1020 and 1023). But perhaps Warsama's real crime was to be too left-wing for the cronies of the local Labour party and Unison leaderships.

The tribunal was delayed as, one after another, senior managers refused to preside over such a blatant stitch-up. Eventually Keith Miller, top man in economic development and onetime sidekick to disgraced [*aren't they all*? *Ed*] former Doncaster council leader Gordon Gallimore, nobly volunteered to hear the case.

It was Miller's department which set up the "Doncaster 2000" deal whereby Keepmoat Holdings cherrypicked development sites at knock-down prices — and paid him a £500 wedding "gift", among other goodies, in gratitude. The present was condemned as illegal by the district auditor, as was Miller's globetrotting as drinks-carrier to another previous leader, Peter Welsh. The auditor noted that on a "fact-finding" council jaunt to Genoa, Miller had turned up with his mistress. Just the sort of man of integrity, in fact, needed to head the Warsama tribunal.

Warsama produced evidence from the *Yorkshire Post,* which declared that he was not the whistleblower; and from the boy's mother, who admitted that she herself had gone to the press. Yet Miller found Warsama "guilty" anyway. Warsama intends to fight on. An employment tribunal and a possible libel case beckon. From now on the burden of proof will lie with his accusers and be heard by independent judges. At the cost of hundreds of thousands of pounds, no doubt, to Doncaster's hapless taxpayers.

CHILDS' PLAY

SOME two years after it emerged that Isle of Wight council had spent £140,000 on computer software it is never going to use, district auditor Neil Childs has come up with a report mildly rebuking the official concerned, adding that further action would not be "in the public interest".

Yet the report established that the massive mis-spend was not referred to any council committee for ratification, nor was it put out to tender. The official responsible, council IT boss Peter Knight, placed the order with the Island-based Cemoc company — for whom he later went to work.

Childs's verdict? "At most he was guilty of misplaced enthusiasm and lack of judgement."

He found "no evidence" of corruption in Knight's move to a company he had helped so handsomely. It was simply "a natural career progression".

Knight claimed he had told his boss, director of corporate services Mike Fisher, about the contract, as well as the council's solicitor, Peter Pilgrem. Fisher denied it and Pilgrem chose not to respond to the district auditor's request for confirmation.

There is still £54,000 to pay on the contract for the software which cannot be used and cannot be sold on for licensing reasons. Ever mindful of their duty to disburse public funds prudently, the council's "cabinet" has voted... to take no further action!

CRYSTAL BALLS-UP

ONLY DAYS after the 150th anniversary of the grand opening of the original, Bromley's vainglorious plans for the "New Crystal Palace" have gone up in smoke.

Buried in an obscure place on its website was the council's humiliating announcement that the £75m monster multiplex cinema to be planted on the highest parkland ridge in south London (*Eyes passim*) would not now go ahead. Developer London & Regional Properties, said the council, "have failed to complete the lease within the prescribed period"; its [still secret] agreement was terminated and legal action was being considered.

Jubiliation among thousands of local opponents was tempered by the awareness of the millions in council tax Bromley's councillors and officers have squandered on lawyers and security operations which could have been properly spent on regenerating a rundown historic park. The eviction of eco-warriors in March 1999 cost some £2m, for example, and the "security" bill since has been another million-plus. The audit commission is now investigating. As well it might. Bromley stood to gain only £6m for the multiplex lease — yet is reckoned to have fruitlessly spent well over £7m by now. So *that's* what they mean by "best value".

● LAKE DISTRICT artist Tom Dearden was moved by the foot-and-mouth crisis to depict the horrors of the slaughter and the pyres on a large canvas, "Earthshine", as a reminder of the months of anguish endured by the Cumbrian farming community. He offered to lend the painting to South Lakeland district council to display at its head office in Kendal. Alas the "no overall control" council says it doesn't want it. Not because it isn't any good; and nor because its images of blood and fire — as seen on TV — are considered too strong to be shown in public; but because returning officer Jim Morrison has ruled it is "political" and therefore taboo in the run-up to the election. Isn't Britain a ridiculous country?

The Curse Of Gnome

MORE THAN two years ago *Private Eye* apologised in the high court to Sam Yeboah, former assistant chief executive of Hackney council, for a series of articles in Rotten Boroughs which had charted a corruption scandal involving a huge housing fraud on the part of council staff with bogus qualifications.

Our apology (*Eye* 971) followed an employment tribunal which ruled that the council's former housing director, Bernard Crofton, had racially discriminated against Mr Yeboah by accusing him of failing to do enough to stop the "bogus" appointments. Hackney paid Mr Yeboah £380,000. The *Eye* paid him "substantial" damages and all his legal costs. Mr Yeboah's action against the council was funded by the Commission for Racial Equality, then headed by Sir Herman Ouseley, to the tune of some £350,000.

On 16 May this year in the high court Mr Justice Burton overturned the 1998 employment tribunal's verdict against Mr Crofton — Hackney did not appeal — describing its findings as "perverse". Mr Yeboah was refused leave to appeal. Just fancy that!

High Principals

IN THE same week that former Rhodes scholar Bill Clinton opened the new Rothermere American Institute at Oxford University, workmen began measuring up the library at Rhodes House where the American collection was previously stored, with a view to turning it into a common room for Rhodes scholars — and moving the remaining books to, er, the basement toilets.

Some observers fear the warden, Dr John Rowett, wants to bring Rhodes House closer to college status, contrary to the original intention of the Rhodes scholarship to integrate commonwealth students with the rest of the university. The Chief Rhodent, as he is otherwise known, is apparently prepared to create this college atmosphere at the expense of the remaining archive of Commonwealth books, which will be moved to new cramped quarters over the summer, a time when little attention is paid to what goes on in universities.

In 1996 an Oxford professor of American history, Lawrence Goldman, wrote a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* in response to an earlier letter which accused the university of coming up with "various proposals for wrecking Rhodes House in Oxford by adding a wing here and there". Goldman responded: "The new American Studies Institute will be built around a library that will house the American collection, leaving Rhodes House Library to concentrate on imperial history. It is precisely because the university takes its responsibilities for the study of the Empire and Commonwealth so seriously that it has developed this sensible scheme."

How hollow these words sound in the face of the Chief Rhodent's latest scheme.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

WE'VE NEVER GOT THROUGH SO MUCH MINERAL WATER
CRIKEY! I'D NO IDEA CHILDREN DRANK SO MUCH AT THAT AGE
OH NO, JEZ. WE USE THESE FOR FILLING THE PADDLING POOL

Letters

Not averse to verse

Sir,

This morning, the Today programme reported that Sir Paul McCartney's poetry has been featured in Private Eye's Pseuds' Corner.

I've not heard any of the poetry before, but the line quoted "Sadness isn't sadness, but happiness in a black jacket" is imagery that speaks strongly and instantly to me.

As a recently bereaved person, I know that grieving invokes the memories of things and times that you have lost and will not enjoy again.

Those remembered things are happy and will stay with you: the immediate feeling of loss is an overriding sadness that masks that happiness, but which will pass in time.

Sincerely,
ERIC MAWER,

Norfolk.

Right and wrong

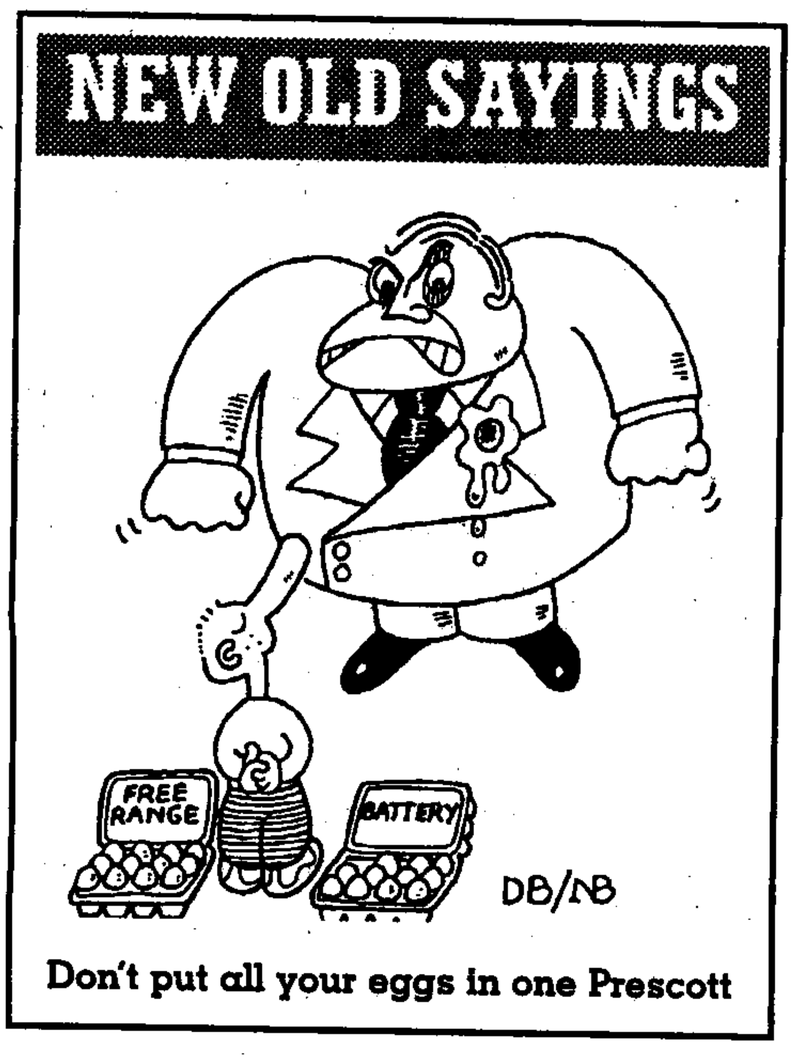
Sir,

I feel obliged to reply to your correspondent of the last issue who attempted to portray the Italian Alleanza Nazionale as some kind of modern democratic centre right party. Like the BNP and the NF in their own time, the AN have been trying desperately to present themselves in a more voter friendly light over the last few years – to such an extent, I believe, that their glorious leader Fini (who was also the head of the openly fascist MSI – Italian Social Movement – before they changed their name to AN) conducts his business from an office no longer graced with a portrait of Mussolini behind his desk.

Your correspondent refers to the "rump" fascist and communist parties Fiamme Tricolore and (presumably) the communist Rifondazione. In actual fact, the rump fascist party is the AN, the Fiamme Tricolore having jumped in to fill the vacuum left by the AN's public watering down of their beliefs in order to stay within the centre right Polo coalition, while the Rifondazione remain outside of the centre left coalition group (for now – they only left recently on a point of principle as they have many times before). The AN can indeed look moderate when compared to the racial puritans of the Fiamme Tricolore and the frightening "green shirts" of Bossi's Lega Nord, but when it comes to fascist rumps, you need look no further than the AN.

Yours sincerely,
PETER MCSNIPE,

Italy.



Don't put all your eggs in one Prescott

Missing link

Sir,

Oh, I see that it's now OK to mount a campaign against something despite the fact that "there are no scientific studies which either prove or disprove a causal link" with an illness ("MMR: Court in the Act", Eye 1028). Come on guys, this is bollocks; what's more, we've been here before – whooping cough vaccine and brain damage (remember that one?), tartrazine and hyperactive children, human insulin and umpteen never-proven "adverse reactions".

Two questions: 1) do you think knowledge proceeds by rational enquiry or by superstition, mumbo-jumbo and scare-mongering?; 2) why the hell should the government or the Department of Health have a vested interest in promoting MMR vaccine if it was dangerous? Perhaps, like David Icke, you believe that all the world's troubles are caused by a conspiracy of 12-foot lizards.

Yours fraternally,
ROGER A FISKEN,

(Address withheld).

Lookalike

Duchess

Geri

Sir,

Has the singing of former Spice Girl Geri Halliwell improved so much that she can now get a place in the back row of the Bach Choir, or has the Duchess of Kent had one too many vitamin injections? I think we should be told.

Yours,
MATTHEW RYE,

Leighton Buzzard, Beds.

Scotch missed

Sir,

Thanks for the name check in your issue of 4 May – spelt correctly too.

Unfortunately, nothing else in the piece was up to the same standard. Even hard-bitten hacks on the Daily Record were astonished at the ludicrous connection between a less than fulsome apology to Mrs Oldfather and the removal of the Editor, Martin Clarke.

Similarly, those who have had to suffer the sorry incidents in Irvine were gobsmacked to discover that all their complaints were simply "untrue".

Your new Scottish correspondent seems long on vitriol and short on facts, but as that is the mixture that makes Private Eye so readable, more power to your organ.

Yours sincerely,
MICHAEL RUSSELL MSP,

Edinburgh.

Fjord popular

Sir,

Having enjoyed your esteemed organ since the age of six, I have never felt compelled to write until now... All this fish farming blether needs to be put into perspective. I have been in Norway recently and discovered that many fish farmers there simply don't have the problems with lice and chemicals that us problem-finding Brits always manage to create. Well our Blonde Relations With a Boring Tendency have an ace up their sleeve – a little type of fish which you put in the water and it feeds on all those nasty little lice, thus removing the need for horrible, nasty chemicals. Simple but brilliant. Good old Norway. I am 28 by the way.

Fishy regards,
RORY HANNAH,

Via email.

Salmon stakes

Sir,

At the risk of making your esteemed organ into Salmon Fanciers' Weekly, may I suggest a middle way between farmed fish full of poisonous crap and wildly expensive wild salmon? The answer is to buy organically farmed salmon. It tastes infinitely better than the ("fake") farmed stuff, without costing infinitely more money. (Don't push me on the maths of that.) Also, if enough people bought it, it would send a message to the fish farmers about food quality, animal welfare and the environment.

Yours,
OLIVER HARRISON,

Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham.

Methodist methods

Sir,

An article in a recent edition of Private Eye about the Methodist Church at Mornington Road, Bingley, has come to our attention and we write not to take up any of the issues involved in that project but make some simple points.

Any Methodist Church Council as managing trustees of the property in their care often have to make difficult decisions about how they can provide for the continuing church in 2001 in buildings often put up over 100 years ago but which are historic or of particular architectural significance.

In handling any scheme of work on a listed building, the trustees must obtain approval through this office which has responsibility for the oversight of ecclesiastical exemption.

In this case it was the local planning Authority that granted Listed building consent for the demolition of the building.

Your harsh comments about a responsible Methodist minister were extremely unfair. In the first place no minister can take such decisions alone. Secondly, s/he often has to guide their flock through a great deal of heartache and hard work.

We have written because we felt you had perceived the then minister to be an easy target whom we suspect preferred not to respond personally.

We would like him, and you, to know your comments did not go unnoticed and that he would find many, including those who have faced similar predicaments, who would offer him their moral support.

Yours sincerely,
ALAN PIMLOTT,

Connexional Property Secretary, The Methodist Church.

Bath time

Sir,

Re: Going Dutch, issue 1027. We act for Bath & North East Somerset Council ("Bath") who have asked us to write to you concerning your article which appeared on page 13 of the above publication.

There has not been a "demise" of Paul Simons. Paul Simons remains a senior council officer working on strategic projects which, like the Spa Project, maintain and enhance Bath's international profile and desirability as a place to live and visit. There has not been any discussion about "lucrative pay-offs" or proposals for Mr Simons to leave.

The time delays and cost increases are well documented and understood as are the wide-ranging benefits that the Spa Project will bring to the whole of the council's area for many years to come. Clearly the council's decision to proceed is based on the belief that the project is a worthwhile investment in the economy, environment and culture of the area.

The Millennium Commission has always actively supported the council, and while there has been an isolated misunderstanding, the relationship remains constructive and positive.

Your article about Bath and Mr Simons was untrue and unfair.

Yours faithfully,
EVERSHEDS,

Cardiff.

I-SPY *Postal ballot paper*

Liberal Democrats

PARTRIDGE

Alan Partridge,
73 Nether-Vell Mead, Church Crookham,
Fleet, Hampshire GU13 0YQ
The Labour Party Candidate

STOCKS

Submitted by Richard Harman. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Half-baked Piloti

Sir,

Piloti's lack of historical perspective is, once again, painful to witness. The mix of stone, brick, render and half-timbering that he so lovingly praises in Ludlow came about by hard nosed builders using new materials as they became available. No sentimentalism in this process. Forget half-timbering, brick is new and better. Who cares if brick doesn't fit in with half-timbering? This is what used to be known as progress.

Piloti and his ilk have now deemed that this dynamic must be stopped, and that Ludlow and other towns like it must be denied the delights of transparency and lightness that modern materials can bring.

It is ironic that those who express such a love of historical buildings completely fail to understand history itself.

JOHN MORAN,

Via e-mail.

Hello, sailor

Sir,

HP Sauce claims that among other volte-faces Shaun Woodward is now in favour of removing the ban on homosexuals serving in the Armed Forces. I wonder which ban that is? The only one I know of was lifted a couple of years ago following a little contretemps in the European court. Do keep up... we gay boys don't lose everything you know.

Yours sincerely,
SEBASTIAN SANDYS,

London E14.

Alton towering

Sir,

It has become quite apparent from many years of reading Private Eye's Street of Shame, Hackwatch, etc, that newspaper editors are foul-mouthed morons (ahem) whose idea of management is to bawl at their staff. Clearly, therefore, the rather civilised memo on swearing from Observer editor Roger Alton ("How Journalism Works", Eye 1028) is a fake and I am somewhat disappointed that you were taken in so easily.

Regards,
TIM POWELL,

University of Bath.

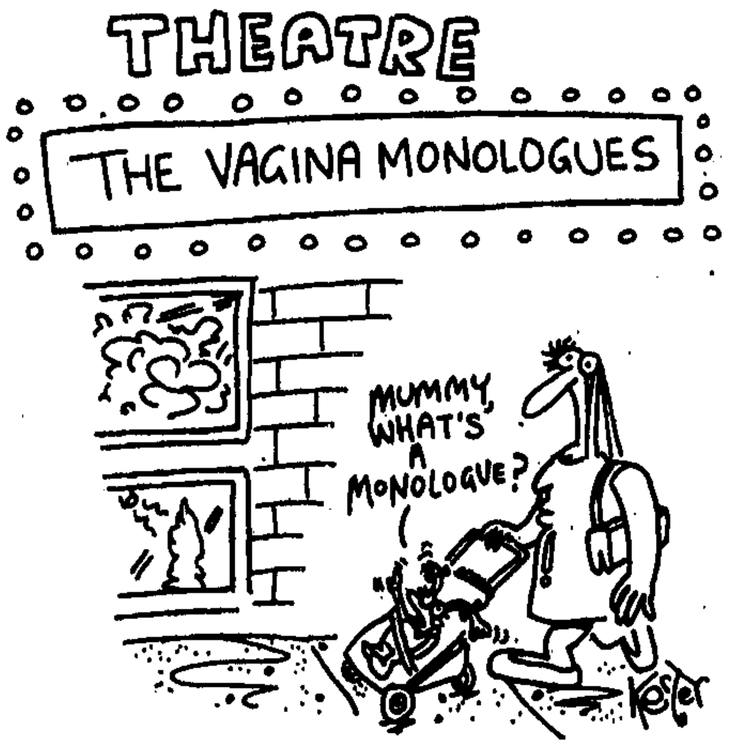
Nudissimo?

Sir,

I am sick of hearing the assertion that if scantily clad performers such as "Bond" can convert young people to classical music it can only be a good thing (Letters, 1028). Rubbish. Classical music is one of the few remaining bastions of talent, where performers still have a chance to rise to the top of their profession through ability and hard work regardless of their looks. If the only reason someone listens to a piece of music is because it's being played by some bird in a wet T-shirt then they are listening to it for all the wrong reasons. Why this patronising need to convert people anyway? It's pure record company hype, a triumph of marketing over talent (see Russell Watson, Charlotte Church et al). What next, the Cardiff Singer of the World Swimwear Section?

Yours sincerely,
PHILIP JEAYS,

Via e-mail.



Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"They're in pole position, ie 3rd position, for the Champions' League."
MARK LAWRENSON, BBC1
(Peter Byrne)

"He's got a great future ahead. He's missed so much of it."
TERRY VENABLES, ITV
(Jonathan Spence)

"In a sense, Deng Xiaoping's death was inevitable, wasn't it?"
JON SNOW, Channel 4
(Donald Campbell)

"A vote for the Lib Dems is a wasted vote – only two parties can win this election."
WILLIAM HAGUE, BBC1
(Paul Merry)

"He's scored!! There's no end to the stoppage of this drama!"
ALAN PARRY, Talk Sports
(Simon Gilford)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

Pseuds Corner

If you have been given the gift of playing snooker for the gods, you must carry the curse of being unable to live comfortably in the world.

SIMON BARNES
The Times

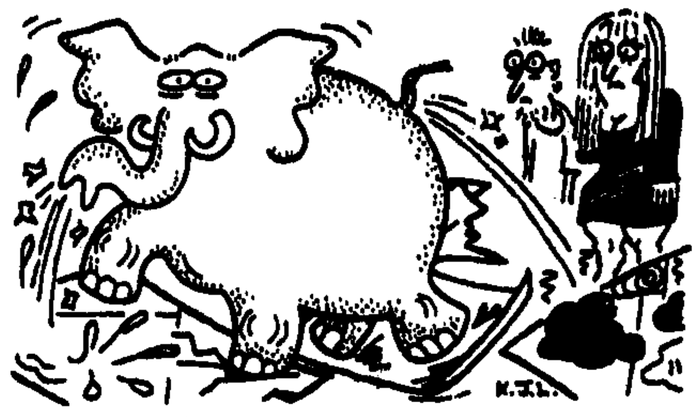
To what extent can 'Carry on Camping' be seen as subversive text?

Exam question, BA/BSc Combined Honours Media and Popular Culture

One should never overestimate the desperation of the Northern club scene. If you put all the contestants in full get-up in one room – quite apart from being a post-ironic interpretation of Sartre's *Huis Clos* – it would look like an average day at Job Club.

LUCY ETHERINGTON
Hot Tickets

Olly and Suzi engage the animals in the art-making process, by encouraging them to interact physically with the work, be it by walking across, mauling, or scratching the painting and thereby



leaving their mark. Through this exchange, the animals transcend the status of mere subjects, becoming active participants in the creative act. The resulting work becomes the authentic record of the event, a glimpse of the animal in all its uniqueness and individuality, now imbued, through the choice of natural materials, with the ambivalence of its environment.

GABBY CAMPBELL JOHNSON
Nature First (Natural History Museum members' magazine)

Pak Keung Wan is being paid to sit in a pitch-black cave and collect his breath – in the name of art. His bottled breath will be exhibited at a £5,000 show at a city council-funded art gallery. Mr Wan, 31, will spend seven hours a day – for five days – in a cave beneath Nottingham Castle, breathing into a tube. The condensed liquid will be transferred to a jar and exhibited at Angel Row Gallery under the title *Inhaled.*

"We're keen to support artists from the region and get them to create something new," said Deborah Dean, who manages Nottingham's publicly-funded exhibitions. "This artist is interested in reducing things down to the mere act of breathing. Good art should make us question our surroundings. This makes me question things I take for granted and think about even the simplest things."

Nottingham Evening Post

One should be clear, on the other hand, that this has been a very political, principled, by no means purely pragmatic, government. The distinction I would make is that it is a micro-ideological government, compared with, say, the Bush administration, which is attempting to be more macro-ideological... A line I often quote from Molière (ironically in my case) just flashed into my head: "Je vis de bonne soupe et non de beau langage." Good government works better than fine philosophy. The omniscient electorate is never wrong.

SIÔN SIMON
Daily Telegraph

CONTRIBUTORS: Nick Milner-Gulland, James Wallin, Anon, Timothy Waters, Terry Hanstock, David Birnbaum.

£10 paid for entries

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"It was horrible. We could see him choking and gagging and frothing and everything," Donna Beaulieu told reporters in Honolulu. "As soon as we caught sight of him, we had a hunch he wasn't going to make it. And who wants to round off an otherwise perfect tropical vacation by flying home sitting next to a corpse?"

Donna Beaulieu and her family were demanding financial compensation from Continental Airlines after their return flight from Bali to Hawaii had made an unscheduled stop at a remote island near Guam. "A middle-aged man in a hospital gown was carried onto the plane by two attendants, and put in the seat next to me. I tried to complain, but the attendants just walked away and left the plane, and there was no point in talking to the man, because he was unconscious. Soon after we took off, his breathing got worse, and he started to rattle, and his

leg kept falling out into the aisle. My daughter Teresa had to keep pushing it back, so the food cart wouldn't run over it.

"After about three hours, he died, but the airline staff didn't remove him. They just pushed him into an upright position, propped him up with a pillow under his head, and tucked him in like he was having a nap. Then they went on serving the food. Frankly, it put us right off our meal. Airline food isn't good at the best of times, but having a corpse inches away from our trays made us lose interest in the crackers and jelly. An hour after his death and he was starting to emit bad smells. It was vile."

A spokesman for Continental refused to comment on the case, but said that the airline is obliged to provide transportation to Hawaii for critically-ill passengers in Micronesia. *(The Parrot [Ghana], 22/4/01. Spotter: Malcolm Cupis)*

—o—

"I don't know why they kept me so long in prison," seventy-six-year-old Ivan Boroughs told reporters from his home in May Pen, Jamaica. "I'm just glad to be out. I did not enjoy staying there. I am looking forward to living a good life now, but it was a long time to be in jail, and I am still upset."

Boroughs, who had been charged with malicious destruction of property in December 1972, had spent nearly twenty-nine years in prison without trial for allegedly smashing a pane of glass in a bank. A prison official explained that "at first, Mr Boroughs was deemed mentally ill, and therefore unfit to stand trial. He was remanded in custody, and soon got better, and we all waited to be told what to do next. But nobody ever told us."

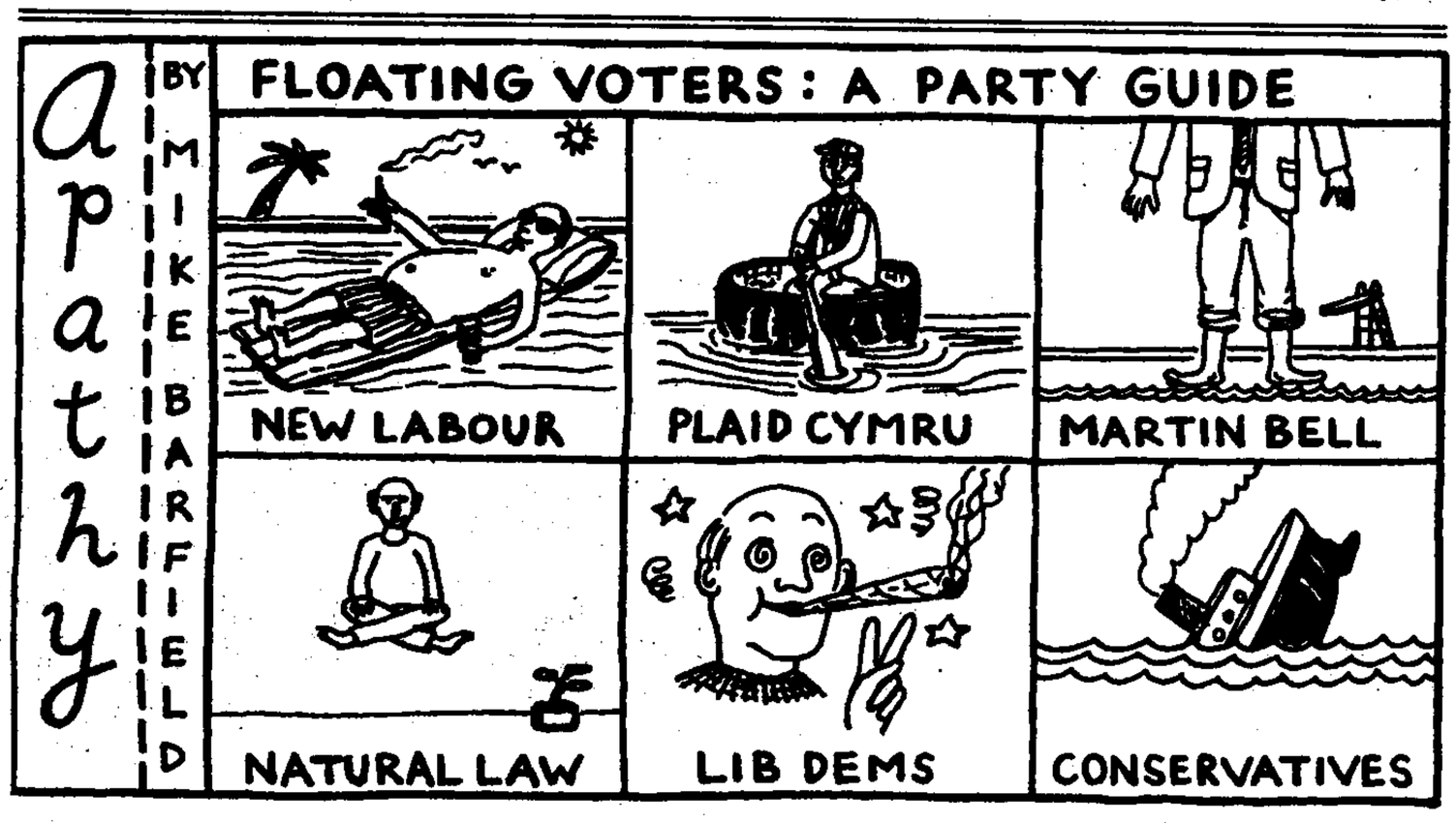
The Commissioner of Corrections, John Prescod, confirmed that officials had known that Boroughs was in prison. "We were monitoring his progress yearly, but we had to wait on communication from the court, and that did not come until Tuesday. It's ironic, really, because if he had been charged and found guilty, the maximum sentence would only have been three years." *(The Gleaner [Jamaica], 17/2/01. Spotter: Alun R. K. Long)*

—o—

"I don't know what all the fuss is about, or why the Students Union has dragged us into this," Chris Anderson, captain of Waikato University men's volleyball team, told a hastily convened press conference in Hamilton, New Zealand. "Don't they have anything better to do? We checked first with the organisers, and they said we could have any sponsors we liked, so what's the problem?"

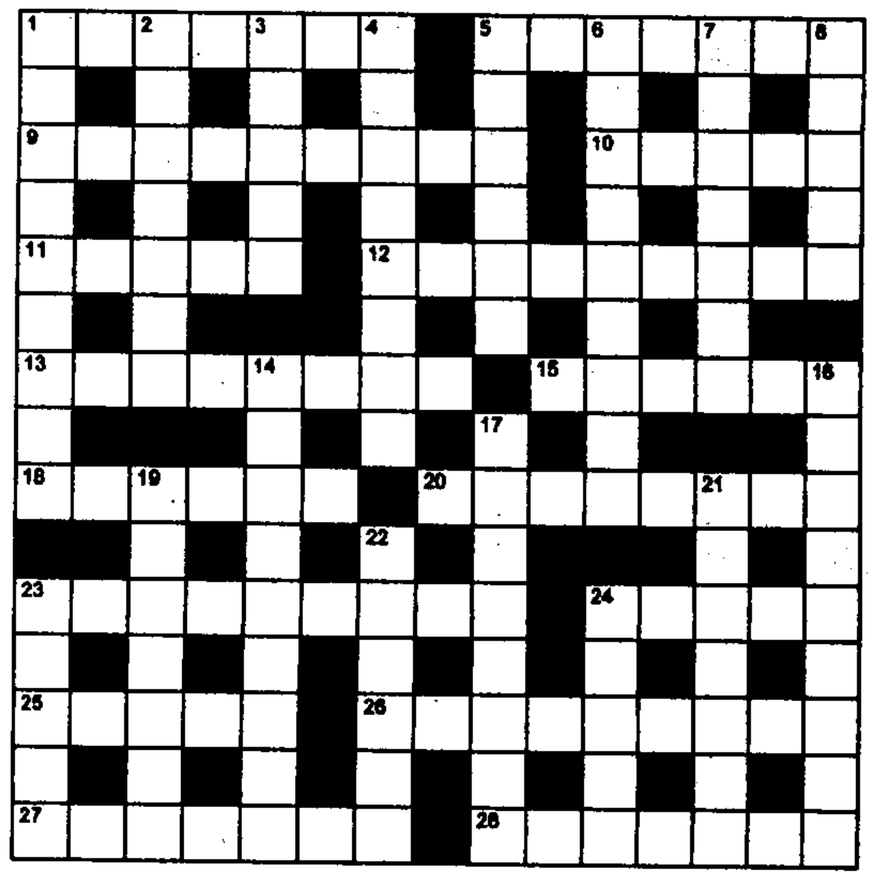
But the team's decision to accept sponsorship from the California Girls escort agency, and to wear shirts carrying their phone number and the slogan "Get Fucked in Horny Hamilton," was attacked by Union co-president Mecina Stanbury. "The sex industry has now become a stakeholder in the University of Waikato, and the university's acceptance of this sponsorship is implicit acceptance of the sale of women as sexual merchandise. This glorification of the sex industry by the team has degraded the reputation of the university, and of other credible associated bodies involved with the games."

University Vice-Chancellor Bryan Gould was unavailable for comment, but the owner of the California Girls escort agency, Pete Lawton, insisted that "I'll just let the narrow-minded rant and rave. Prostitutes have been part of the community for a long time now, and it's time people accepted what we do." (New Zealand Herald, 19/4/01. Spotter: Michael O'Reilly)



EYE CROSSWORD 184

by Cyclops — *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1/10/18 Dish that sums up today's Britain according to (big-headed) cook (7,5,6)
5 Pisspot, stupid antic of indian chief (7)
9 Swearing matter if a fat diva farts around, missing note (9)
10 See 1ac.
11 Left and Right – enough to get a bloke taking pills (5)
12 A slimy descent in the offing for Blair again? (9)
13 Barely-disguised lust and joy when penis centrally inserted (4,4)
15 Clout Wales's top figure (6)
18 See 1ac.
20 Studies and craps perhaps – a thankless task (4,4)
23 Plot to get sad leader, the accepted Conservative way of doing things? (9)
24 Anaesthetic called for when Brenda digests article ... (5)
25 ... Frank Punch article about Philip primarily (5)
26 Do something Jack Straw wouldn't like and languish unwanted (2,7)
27 Porn, say, corrupts – like many perfumes (5-2)
28 Election tip: vacillating Rev Blair lacks youth team (7)

DOWN

1/23 "Conservative Girl measurements (including topless horsey type)" – the limited extent of scholarly content in manifesto? (9,5)
2 Fellow taken in by vague Indie line – could be Christian, Muslim or Gentile (7)
3 Fame/glory offered by a nation on the up? Sod off! (5)
4 Writer: "No way live broadcast's going in" (8)
5 Crock, on going to specialist hospital is able to perform OK in bed (6)
6 A dotcom company's true worth? (3,6)
7 Whisper "Stink lingers; rest's surprisingly gone" (7)
8/16 Follow the likes of Mrs Thatcher and snort "Shit!" (5,3,6)
14 Wobbly mass on girlfriend is sweet (5,4)
16 See 8
17 Dominating woman, Brenda, on the buzzer (5,3)
19 Spy comical dog with no tail mounting Brenda (7)
21 One who lacks faith in seat (he *is* Tory) (7)
22 One who hasn't got around to laying off Irving (6)
23 See 1dn.
24 Predatory creature – in essence a Glenda? (5)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 8.6.01. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN.

Solution to Crossword No. 183

Winner: HARRY CAWTHORNE

ACROSS: 1 Climb down 6/9/19 Leave no stone unturned 10 Peerage 11 Crook 12 Dalai Lama 14/25 The Curse of Hello 15 Rascal 17 Tahiti 22 Motorcade 23 Strip 27 Die Hard 28 Endow 29 Royal Navy.

DOWN: 1 Cynic 2 Inshore 3 Blockbuster 4 Overdose 5 Napalm 6 Lee 7 Aramaic 8 Eyeballed 13 In a nutshell 14 Totem pole 16 Once a day 18 Hitched 20 Nirvana 21 Labour 24 Podgy 26 Low.

THE NEWS

(as seen and heard on all media)

Newsreader: Today the political parties will be concentrating on the environment and transport. The Lib Dem spokesman, Mr Sandy Beard, will visit a recycling plant in Truro. The Conservative spokesman Mr Sebastian Pinstripe will go on a walkabout near a proposed cycle lane in Croydon .And the Labour spokesman will unveil new plans to target toxic emissions from domestic barbecues.

And now the other news... Oldham is still on fire after the seventh successive night of rioting. Racial violence also spread to Aylesbury, where Asians and skinheads clashed. In Portadown in Northern Ireland, there were clashes between police and protestors – but let's forget all that and get back to the election.

Today it's your chance to put your questions on the environment and transport to the deputy spokesman of the Green Party, Simon Weed.

Caller: I live in Oldham and someone has just burned my house down. What are you going to do?

Weed: The Green Party has always made it clear that we are worried by the gases emitted by burning houses. That is why we fully support the Kyoto initiative which the European Parliament has ratified under Section...

Newsreader: I'm sorry, we've just had an urgent news flash that the Government Environment Secretary Mrs Voda Phone will be delivering a speech later today in which she will say that Labour are going to appoint a "Wheelie-Bin Czar" to crack down on overflowing wheelie bins.

We understand that the Conservative spokesman, Mr Jeremy Winebar, will attack the Wheelie-Bin Czar idea and claim that this initiative which would cost the country £20 billion, put £10 on the price of a gallon of petrol and permit Brussels to allow millions of asylum seekers to live in the front room of your burning house *(continued on all channels until 7 June)*

HAGUE FEVER BRINGS MISERY TO MILLIONS

by Our Medical Staff **Ann T. Histamine**

MILLIONS of Britons were warned today to stay indoors for the next two weeks, particularly on 7 June when forecasters predict the highest levels of Hague Fever on record.

Said a doctor: "What happens is that Hague gets up the patient's nose, and they begin to feel irritation or possibly drowsiness. It is important that sufferers do not do anything mechanical, such as vote or drive to a polling station, whilst experiencing the symptoms of Hague Fever."

Opinion Pollen

However, relief is at hand because experts predict that by the end of June Hague Fever will disappear for ever, to be replaced by Spanish Flu (or *Portillosis desperatis,* to give it the full medical term).

To read more about Hague Fever, visit our website www.achoo.co.uk where you will find details of our helpline (0908 7643278), which will tell you where to buy this magazine.

A Taxi-Driver Writes A Novel

*THIS WEEK Private Eye begins an exclusive eight-week serialisation of the new novel "Blimey Guv" by **Richard Littlejohn** (voted Britain's Number One Cabbie by Cabs & Cabmen Magazine, 1997)*

Chapter One
Blimey Guv! What's this country coming to? I mean to say!

Chapter Two
These asylum seekers, for example. If I had my way I'd string 'em all up!

Chapter Three
It's the only language they understand!

Chapter Four
Except they *don't,* cos none of them can speak the Queen's English! Right guv?!?

Chapter Five
Wanna go over Kew Bridge or Tower Bridge to Heathrow, Guv? Either way the traffic's murder! I blame the social workers and the Guardian readers and the do-gooders myself.

Chapter Six
Get out of the f***ing way! Bloody cyclists! They should be strung up an' all!

Chapter Seven
I had a bloke from HarperCollins in the back once! A real gentleman! He gave me hundreds of thousands of pounds to write a book!?! Blimey Guv – I mean, what's the country coming to?!

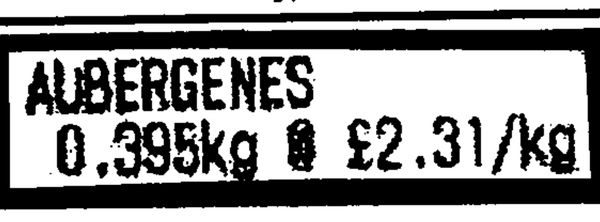
© World copyright Richard Littlebrain (Cab No. 100074)

HOW I WILL VOTE

by DR ADAM HEARTTHROB from the top medical soap ENT (played by actor Robson Jerome – real name Jerome Robson)

WE'RE RIGHT in the middle of filming episode 797 of the new ENT series but if I do get out to vote I think I'll probably vote Lib Dem or possibly Green. My Dad was a Tory, which means I might swing that way but I think Tony Blair has done a good job and we should give him a second chance.

TOMORROW: Brooklyn Beckham puts the case for voting UKIP.



Booths Supermarket, Windermere

SEVEN DAYS TO SAVE THE HAGUE

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

And all I can say, as our PCC elections draw even nearer, is that the last three weeks have been the most exciting, heart-warming and truly pivotal experience I can remember since I first took charge of the parish in 1997!

Everywhere I have been in the past few weeks I have been greeted by groups of happy, smiling people, (organised by Mr Campbell) thanking me for all the good work I have put in on their behalf to make their lives better, richer and more modern in every way.

Who says that no one cares any more and that no one is interested in turning out to meet the vicar? Who says no-one wants to hear the "good news" – the news of a new world in which everyone works together to build a fairer society for all? A world not just for the better off but the rich as well?

Time and again I was impressed by the sheer number of people who turned out to see me. For example, in our local hospital, they had been literally queuing up for months, and "so great was the multitude", as it says in the Bible, that they were spilling out onto trolleys in the corridors and wheelchairs in the car park!

As I said to them, "Blessed are those who wait, for they shall see God rather sooner than they expected!" *(Book of the Dead, Ch. VI, 12).*

It's a pity that one woman had to spoil the afternoon for everybody by insisting on coming up and shouting at me, just because her "partner" was dying for lack of medical attention.

And what a pity she chose to make such an unfortunate fuss in front of our friends from the media, who Mr Campbell had spent weeks organising to film my visit and to show how much the church listens to ordinary people.

Eventually I managed to calm her down by telling her than I was only there to help, and that by the year 2015 the parish would be allocating an additional 15 percent a year to the hospital fund, which would achieve precisely the improved care she was asking for.

As I told her, it's all a matter of resources, which comes of course from the original Greek, "reskos", meaning "sorry", and "orkis", meaning "no money".

Sadly, the lady in question wasn't prepared to listen and stormed off before she could hear my words of comfort (which of course comes from the original Aramaic "Com" or "go", and "fort", "on thy way".

Frankly, that good lady reminded me all too vividly of another, rather older woman in our parish who would be equally well advised to hold her peace these days.

I am talking, of course, of my predecessor, the Deaconess Thatcher, who is, alas, in a state of some confusion nowadays, due to her advancing age and dependence on alcohol.

She has seen fit, for some reason known only to herself, to allege that I somehow still cling on to the old discredited beliefs. Things like helping the poor, tending the sick and fighting against injustice! Honestly, no-one believes in any of that stuff anymore, least off all me!

All I can say is that I have shown considerable patience with this particular previous incumbent, and that it really is time for us all to move on, particularly her – perhaps to another life!

And talking of moving on, I have composed a new chorus for our service of thanksgiving for the victory in the PCC elections (!!), which we will be trying out at this week's Evensong.

Moving on, moving on,
From the place where we have gone.
Don't look back, just look ahead,
These are the words the vicar said.

Chorus

Move on, move on,
Move on, move on,
Sharron, Darren and Yvonne

(or the congregation may sing other names, eg, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John)

So this is the message I have been trying to put over to the parish in recent weeks. I am not for a minute saying that we have done everything that we promised we were going to do! No. That is why we need another five years so that we can keep those promises over the years that lie ahead!

Look! We are not complacent. Far from it! Just because we are going to get the overwhelming support of everyone in the parish, that does not mean we should be complacent in any way!

Indeed, we should be humble when we contemplate the pride we rightly take in all that we have achieved!

That is why I urge you all to make "the sign of the cross" alongside the names of all my team on the Big Day!

Yours ever,

Tony

CHERIE — AN APOLOGY

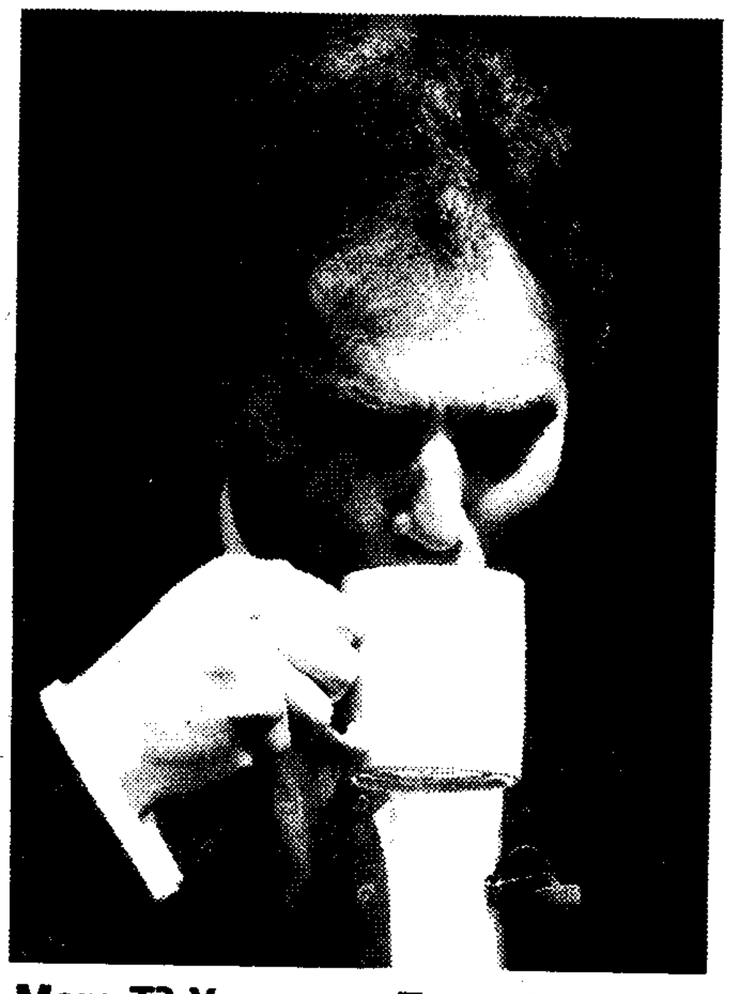
MAY I apologise to all Tony's parishioners for the fact that I have not been "out and about" with Tony in the parish these last few weeks. This is because I have been working on a very important case in my job as a lawyer, defending one of our most respected local multi-national chemical companies against the attempts by various greedy parishioners to get more pension money out of them! Honestly! And, anyway, why should I be paraded around the parish just because I am the Vicar's wife. The Vicar doesn't need me to help, as he proves every night when he gets up to look after the baby!

Cherie Booth

PS. If anyone wants my personal help on any legal matters, contact me on my mobile: 07103 456789. Usual rates apply.

MR PRESCOTT – A STATEMENT

A lot of people have written to me complaining about the recent incident involving our good friend Mr Prescott of the Working Men's Club and a parishioner Mr Evans. Of course, I cannot condone Mr Prescott's behaviour on this occasion, but we must remember that John is John, ie a bit of a rough diamond who did not have the benefit of a decent education and is therefore prone to express himself through his fists, rather than through the kind of debating skills which a career as the barman in a working men's club scarcely equips you for! T.B.



More T? Yes, more Tony please for this congregation! Lets all support the man with the honest mug! A.C.

Daily Mail

Friday, June 1, 2001

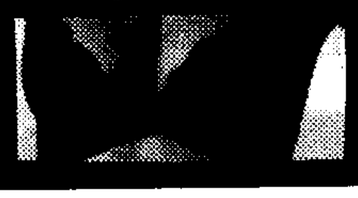
Newspaper of the Year 35p

Is The Bikini Coming Back?

Hundreds of pics of birds in bikinis

Can This Superbra Give You A 46 D-Cup over night?

More pics of girls in bras



Why Does Channel Five Keep On Pumping Out Soft Porn Every Night?

More pics of girls not even wearing bras

New Book's Shock Claim

CHARLES AND PHILIP 'DON'T GET ON'

By Our Royal Correspondent
Richard Kayglarist

A SENSATIONAL new account of the life of the Duke of Edinburgh reveals that the 80-year-old Duke does not always "see eye-to-eye" with his son Charles, 52.

The author of these shock revelations, which throw an entirely new light on the personal relationship between the Queen's husband and her son, is believed to have read over 100,000 old press cuttings before reaching his devastating conclusions.

PHIL THE PAGE

Among the astonishing claims made in an article in the Daily Telegraph, which I read yesterday, are that:

- **Prince Philip packed his son off to a boarding school rather than have him at home**
- **Prince Philip forced his son into the Navy, when Charles wanted to become a ballerina**
- **The Duke strongly disapproved of all his son's girlfriends, including Diana and Camilla, and told him to "get a grip"**
- **The Duke is an incredible 80-year-old, but tries to keep this a secret.**

For Full Story Read Yesterday's Daily Telegraph
(Surely pages 18-36? P.D.)

Economic Meltdown Imminent

THIS newspaper can exclusively reveal that the economy might perhaps be slightly slowing down a bit.

This is catastrophic news for Labour, as it will surely mean that in the next twelve months we'll see house prices plummet, unemployment soar, the pound collapse, Britain plunged back into a primitive feudal system, giant lizards roaming the Earth and the Conservative Party being returned to power.

● **Full story inside editor's imagination.**

APOLOGY

In recent weeks and months, we may have given the mistaken impression that defending yourself or your property by means of reasonable force was the inalienable right of every British citizen. That when a man can shoot a long-haired gipsy and not get away with it, it's a pretty sad state of affairs.

We now realise that, in the light of John Prescott punching a farmer, defending yourself with excessive zeal is frowned upon and seen as wrong by every British citizen. When a man can punch a long-haired farmer and get away with it it's a pretty sad state of affairs, which at the very least should lead the Government to declare this election void and the Conservatives named as the winner.

We apologise for any confusion caused.

Lady Thatcher Speaks Exclusively To The Mail's Simon Heffalump

SHE shimmered into the room, a vision in blue, looking not a day older than her 436 years. I was reminded of Shakespeare's immortal tribute to her all those years ago: "Age cannot wither her, nor the years forget".

"How are you, Prime Minister?" I tentatively enquired, with a lump in my throat as I contemplated her infinite loveliness.

"I can't wait to get back to Number Ten and sort out that ghastly little man, Major," she told me, her voice rising to a crescendo of passion and burning love for her country.

"Has anyone ever told me you look beautiful when you're angry?" I asked her, as I knelt *(cont'd. p. 94)*

POETRY CORNER

Lines On The 80th Birthday of Mr Humphrey "Humph" Lyttleton

So. Congratulations
Humphrey Lyttleton.

Band leader and
Radio quiz show host.

Bad Penny Blues.
That was your
Hit.

Yes, we remember
How it goes –
Da da di da
Di da da
(Repeat)

But what was
Your long-running
Programme called?

I'm sorry I
Haven't a
Clue[1]

E.J. Thribb (17½)

[1]Andrew Motion* writes
Once again Thribb shows his verbal dexterity by providing a final three-line stanza with a double meaning, leaving the reader in a state of what Keats called "Heightened Ambiguity."

*Andrew Motion's latest work *Lines To Miss Laura Fish* is in the possession of the relevant authorities. The Eye can however reveal the opening verse of the collection: *Ms Laura Fish/You are a dish/But don't make any trouble/ Or you'll be out at the double.*

"People who have paid tax all their working lives should not be heavily taxed in their retirement. We must ensure pensioners have choice and dignity not poultry handouts."

Common Sense, Colchester Conservative Party

POLLY FILLER MEETS TONY BLAIR

I AM in the high-tec nerve centre of Labour's election machine. Around me, computers ring urgently, telephones hum insistently and fax machines churn out reams of up-to-the-minute coffee. And at the eye of the storm sits one of the most influential figures in Britain. (Not me, I hasten to add, though it's nice of you to think it!)

Tony Blair is waiting to meet me and in the flesh is surprisingly tall, though disappointingly short. He is tanned, fit, pale and unhealthy. He is clearly nervous to meet me and although he is not sweating, I can imagine beads of perspiration forming on his upper lip, if he were.

But I am not letting his easy charm, good looks and lack of nervousness divert me from the questions that ordinary people want answered.

"Why won't you bring in tax relief for nannies?"

Blair smiles and deftly ducks the question by saying that there are more important issues at the moment – like hospitals and schools.

"Ok, then," I say, taking him on. "Let's talk schools. I can't get my toddler Charlie into any of the decent pre-preps in Islington. What are you going to do about it?"

Blair's smile fades. I have obviously caught him out. He offers me a coffee in an attempt to sidetrack me, but I am having none of it. He is on the ropes and he knows it. Immediately, spin-meister Alastair Campbell comes over to rescue his flailing leader. "Everything alright, Polly?" he says menacingly. "We can only give you an hour or so before we get to the day care centre. Is that enough?" Once again, New Labour's control freakery has taken over in an attempt to prevent me getting under the skin of the all-too vulnerable Tony Blair.

"Sorry. Where were we?" the Prime Minister begins evasively. "We're trying to help the media as much as we can."

I resist snorting into my cappuccino (I've had better) and counter aggressively, "If you are so concerned about the media, why do you allow so much male-oriented sport on television? Do you know that at this very moment my partner the useless Simon is watching pro-celebrity lawn-mower racing from Chatsworth, hosted by Charlie Dimmock and Jensen Button on Sky Bazal Life Sport 2? It's an outrage."

Blair blinks like a rabbit caught in the headlamps. He has been shielded from the real world for too long. He has been spoon-fed tame questions from compliant journalists and when a real issue involving real people arises, he is completely stumped.

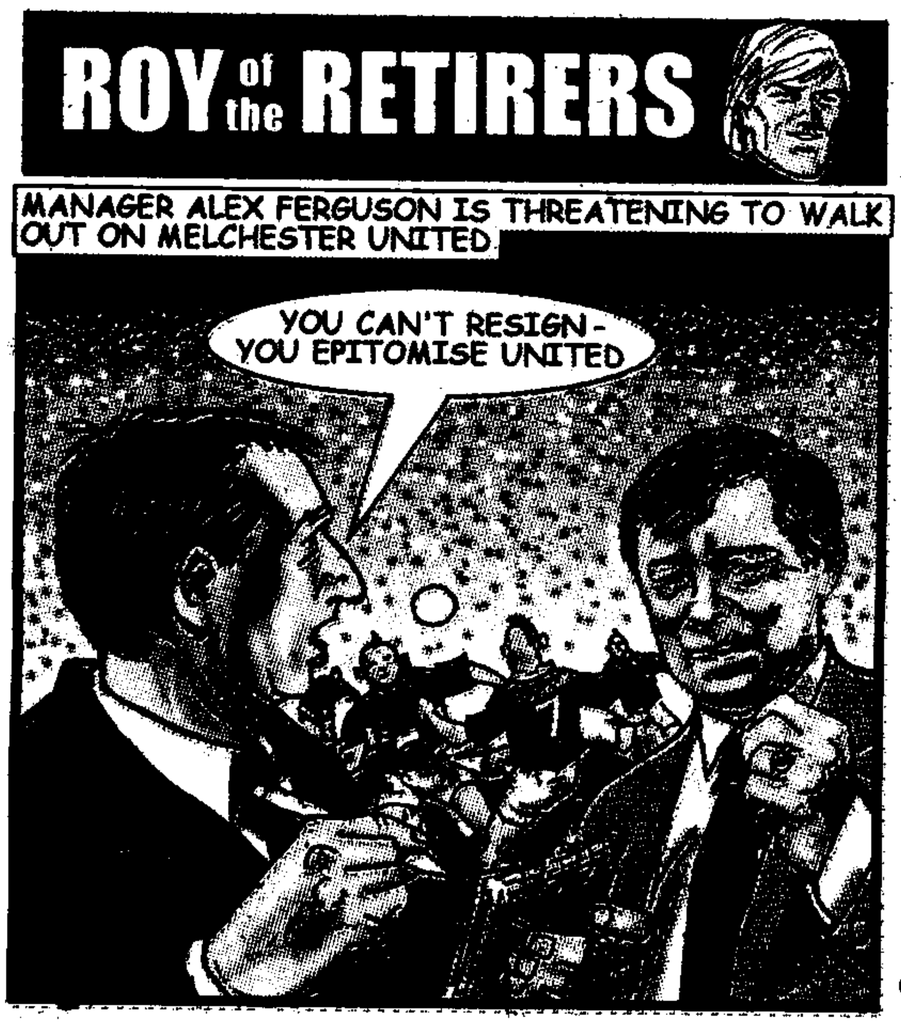
"I'm sorry, Polly, I have no idea what you are talking about."

AND that's it in a nutshell. That sentence is the whole trouble with New Labour. When I mention council tax on second homes, the price of fuel for 4x4 off-roaders or the cost of eating out in North London, he simply looks bewildered.

As I am ushered off the battlebus into a waiting taxi, I am saddened by New Labour's betrayal of its natural supporters. But at least I can go home knowing that I have stood up for the ordinary working person in Britain and given them a voice which they have been denied by Tony Blair for far too long.

© Polly Filler.

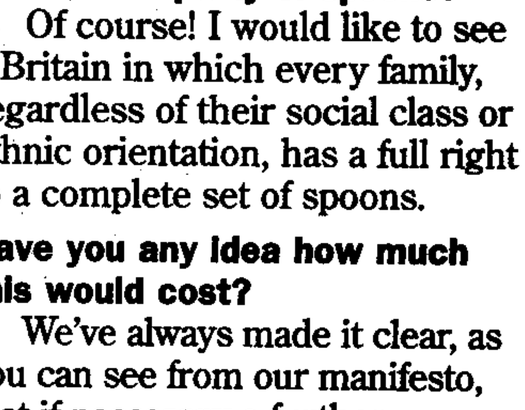
ROY of the RETIRERS



THERE'S ONLY ONE MILLION POUNDS!
COME ON YOU READIES!
I DO?
YES-YOU'RE BRASH, ARROGANT AND YOU WANT HUGE AMOUNTS OF MONEY!
ROOPER

ME AND MY SPOON

ELECTION SPECIAL



CHARLES KENNEDY

I suppose you don't have much time for spoons these days?

No, you're wrong! I always try to make time for spoons, however busy my schedule may be!

So would you call the Lib Dems the natural party of spoons?

Of course! I would like to see a Britain in which every family, regardless of their social class or ethnic orientation, has a full right to a complete set of spoons.

Have you any idea how much this would cost?

We've always made it clear, as you can see from our manifesto, that if necessary a further penny should be put on income tax to guarantee the delivery of full enspoonment to the people of Britain.

You have a partner. Do you share spoons with her?

Och, yes. We're very close. We often share a teaspoon, and even sometimes a soup spoon! But perhaps I shouldn't say that!

Do you think spoons are sufficiently high on the electoral agenda?

Well, it's all a question of priorities, isn't it? There are so many important issues, aren't there? The Health Service, crime, proportional representation, legalising cannabis. But that isn't to say we shouldn't find a place for spoons too.

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

Yes. I was once on a chat show with Uri Geller and (contd. p. 94)

DAY 94 OF ELECTION 2001

IN TODAY's 94-page election special, we bring you all the pieces you don't want to read, by the Eye's top team.

Man with glasses analyses the Brown-Blair rift. Could the national insurance ceiling issue prove the straw that breaks the Chancellor's back? p. 3

Woman you haven't heard of joins the Lib Dem battlebus on the M29 to Skegness. A surprisingly bouncy Charles Kennedy is confident that his "penny on income tax" pledge will woo the floating "grey vote" – or will it? p. 5

Young bloke visits an inner city primary school in Solihull and asks the kids whether they've heard of Francis Maude. A surprising 0 percent say "yes". p. 6

Man with bowtie conducts a "poll of polls" and concludes that Labour could well win this election. p. 7

Someone amusing accompanies Ann Widdecombe in the Widdiecopter and notices that she's quite fat and has a squeaky voice. p. 11

Another woman looks at the media coverage of the election and asks "Is there an anti-woman bias in media election teams?" p. 15

Old man bemoans the lack of excitement in modern elections, and remember how different things were in the old days. p. 17

PLUS Cartoonist of the Year **Martin Bummer** takes a wry sideways look at John Prescott, and asks "Is he New Labour's answer to Lennox Lewis?"

PLUS Domestic supergoddess **Nigella Lawson** unveils her easy-to-cook "election night al fresco supper for six".

RECIPE

1. Phone up Pizza Hut.
2. Tell Darren where you live.
3. Ask for six deep-pan thick-crust American Hots with extra cheese.
4. Answer door.
5. Receive plaudits from guests.
6. Put in new book.
7. Receive large cheque from publisher.

© Nigella Sound-Bites 2001.

BLAIR BLAMES TELEVISION FOR 'ELECTION STUNTS'

by Our Political Staff **Andrew Marrvelous**

TONY BLAIR lashed out last night at television companies who are trying to undermine Labour's campaign by "filming cheap stunts" rather than concentrating on the real issues.

The Prime Minister spoke out during a spontaneous visit to an old people's home where he had tea with a toddler before meeting some disabled pets. He said, "It is disgraceful that television reporters persistently film embarrassing moments such as this one which have been deliberately set up as photo opportunities."

Removing his jacket and pausing only to sing the first two verses of the hymn 'All things bright can only get better,' he continued, "How dare the media try to manipulate this election for the sake of a few pictures on the evening news? That is my job."

Tony Blair is 47% ahead of William Hague for some reason.

THAT LIB DEM MANIFESTO IN FULL

1. Admit they're going to raise taxes to deliver improved public services.

2. Don't get elected.

3. Er... that's it...

THAT TORY MANIFESTO IN FULL

1. Claim they're going to cut taxes to deliver improved public services.

2. Don't get elected.

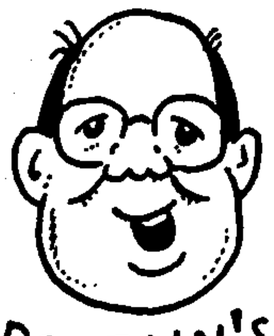
3. Er... that's it...

THAT LABOUR MANIFESTO IN FULL

1. Get elected.

2. Er... that's it...

IT'S VAZ



BRITAIN'S TOP COMIC!

CONDOM REPORT SLAMS 'CORRUPT CRICKET'

by Our Man Behind The Pavilion **W.G. Disgrace**

THE WORLD of cricket was rocked to its foundations yesterday when, after a lengthy four-year investigation, Inspector "Knacker of the Yard" Condom finally unveiled his shock report into the wholesale corruption which has brought the so-called "gentlemen's game" into total disrepute.

"Make no mistake," the inspector told waiting newsmen, "I have uncovered a worldwide web of corruption stretching across all five continents and reaching up to some of the senior figures in the game, including Hanse Kaffirbasher, the former Transvaal seam-bowler, Nasir Bakhander, the Bangladeshi reserve wicket-keeper, and Sunil Challenjanneka, the Sri Lankan veterans XI spin-bowler."

"As I delved deeper and deeper into this murky twilight world, I was literally amazed by the stories I was hearing.

SHOCK

"I read this cutting from the Peshawar Times which clearly alleged that something funny was going on in the world-famous Dubai International Trophy match in 1992, and that somewhere behind it was a mysterious 'Mr Big' who had close connections with a certain bookmaker operating out of Indonesia, or possibly India, or even Indiana.

"After many years of intensive detective work, which has taken me to some of the most agreeable holiday destinations in the world, I can only conclude that it is literally a hornet's nest and that something must be done immediately if the good name of the game of hockey is to be re-established in the eyes of all right-thinking people."

PEARL HARBOR BOMBS

by Our Film Staff Jonathan Dross

"WE DIDN'T see the attacks coming," said the producers of the film Pearl Harbor. "The assaults were unprovoked and cowardly and we were sitting ducks. We had no chance to defend ourselves as wave upon wave of hostile critics blew our film out of the water."

Said Disney spokesman, Mr Michael J. Mouse III, "We thought a huge American film like this was indestructible. With its state-of-the-art technology and billion dollar fire power, we thought it was guaranteed to be safe."

BORA! BORA! BORA!

He continued, "Unfortunately, the enemy reviewers identified a weakness in our defences. The film is no bloody good. And they showed no mercy. We're going down the Kami Khazi."

Radio 4 The Today Programme

What You Missed...

Jim Naughtiebutdim *(for it is he)*: ...and later this morning Libby Purves's guests on Midweek will be the man who invented a squirrel-proof birdfeeder, the author of a new book about Sibelius's piano music, an ex-nun who spent six years in the Foreign Legion and a wine grower from the Hebrides.

But now, the Today programme has the honour and privilege to celebrate the birthday of perhaps the greatest singer, songwriter, composer and poet of all time, Bob Dylan.

And first, we're very fortunate to have someone in the studio, Reg Nargs of the legendary Sixties' group Green Gerbil, who is going to recreate one of Dylan's greatest masterpieces.

Nargs *(Strum, strum, strummity-strum. Sings)*: Hey, man, whereya goin'/You ain't gonna get very far/Cos you ain't gotta Cadillac car... *(Strum, strummily-strum.)*

Naughtie *(weeping with pleasure)*: That was frankly incredible to think that one man could not only write those unforgettable lyrics, but the music to go with them. But now, we have an even greater privilege, the chance of a word with one of the greatest musical geniuses of this or any other time. I am, of course, referring to that legendary figure Blind Lemon Shandy Levine. Are you there, Blind Lemon?

Levine: Sho, man, where am I? I am where I am, 'cos I am where I is.

Naughtie: That's just amazing. To think that we were listening there to the actual voice of Blind Lemon Shandy Levine. And now, on this historic day, when everyone in the world will be thinking of Bob Dylan, one can only say that it is a privilege and an honour to utter his name here on the Today programme. And so, to conclude our homage, to the uncrowned all-time king of popular music, back now to Reg Nays, who will recreate the title song from Bob Dylan's immortal album "I'm Going No Place".

Nargs *(Strum, strummity, strum, strum. Sings)*: I'm a-goin' no place/'Cos that's the place I'm goin' to... *(Strummity, strummity, strum.)*

J. Humphrys *(for it is now he)*: Incredible! What a privilege to have that unforgettable song played right here in the Today Studio. And now, Though For The Day, with Rabbi Ahmed Bajanda Fotherington-Smythe, of the United Reformed Synagogue of Tibet.

Rabbi: You know, when I was watching the Liberal Democrats' election broadcast last night, I turned to my partner and said *(Cont. 94 Mhz)*

HUSBAND

MAN HAS HAIRCUT AGAIN

By Our Beckham Staff **Mo Heakam**

A MAN in his mid-twenties has had his haircut again – a source close to the man said yesterday: "It makes him look different." *(Reuters)*

BILLIE

IS SHE OR ISN'T SHE?

The Question The Whole Nation Is Asking

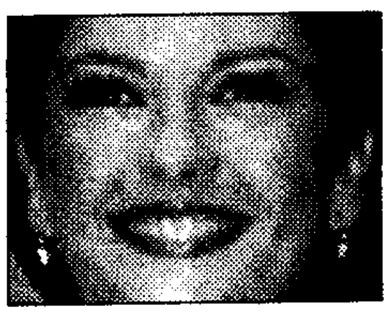
IT's the question that the whole nation is asking. *(You've done this in the headline, you idiot. Ed.)* Is she or isn't she? Some are convinced that she is. But others are sure that she isn't. It's the question that the whole nation is asking. *(Get on with it or you're fired. Ed.)*

Is teen singing sensation Billie mad? The tell-tale signs are clear for everyone to see:

1. She has married Chris Evans.
2 Er...
3. That's it.

THE SUN SAYS

She's mad – and so are we to run this drivel.



CATHERINE ZETA JONES

HAS SHE? OR HASN'T SHE?

The Question The Whole Nation Is Asking When They Are Not Asking The Question About Billie

HAS she or hasn't she? It's the question the whole nation is asking when they are not *(I thought I had fired you. Ed.)*.

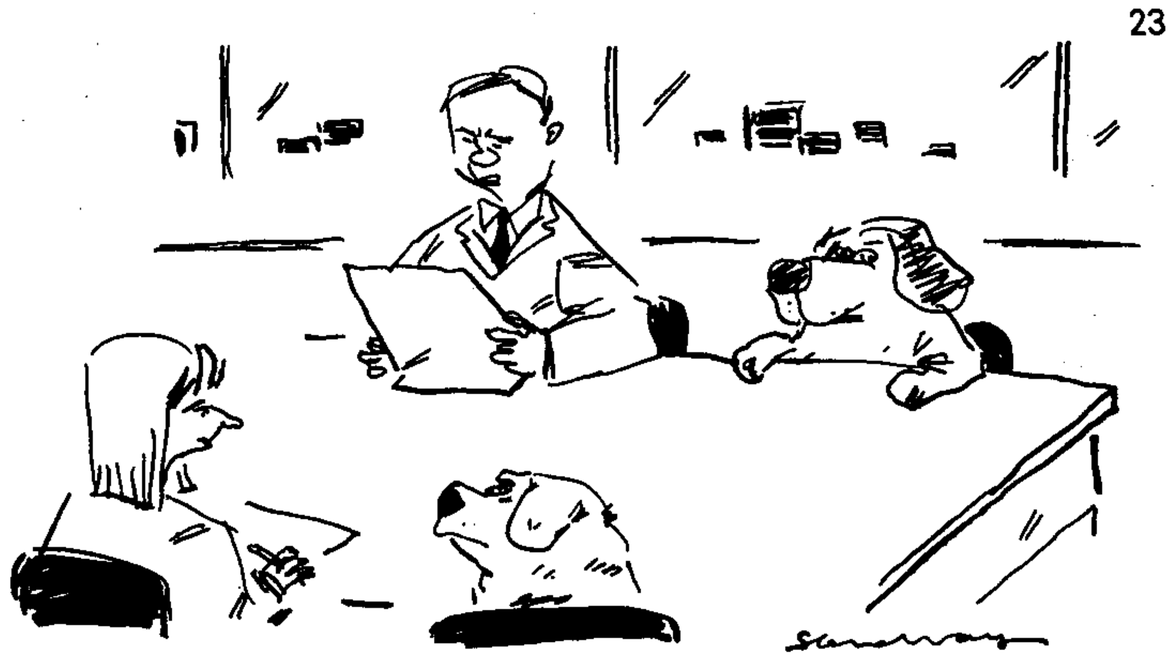
Has Welsh-born movie sensation Catherine Zeta Jones had her brain surgically removed? Here are the tell-tale signs:

1. She has married the elderly Michael Douglas who is old enough to be her grandfather.
2. She has had her eyes done.
3. Er...
4. That's it.

THE MAIL SAYS: WE AGREE WITH WHATEVER THE SUN SAYS

Our apologies to one of our weekly correspondents, Mr Henry Foster, for a misprint in his published letter. More land for mussels after foot and mouth? ... in the Isle of Axholme. Major Cotter thinks ramblers should become eyes and ears infecting Lincolnshire? The word terrorists should have been tourists.

Horncastle News



"My client also maintains his sense of smell was damaged in the fight."

THAT PRINCE PHILIP LETTER TO PRINCE CHARLES IN FULL

TOP SECRET & CONFIDENTIAL

BALMORAL

Tuesday

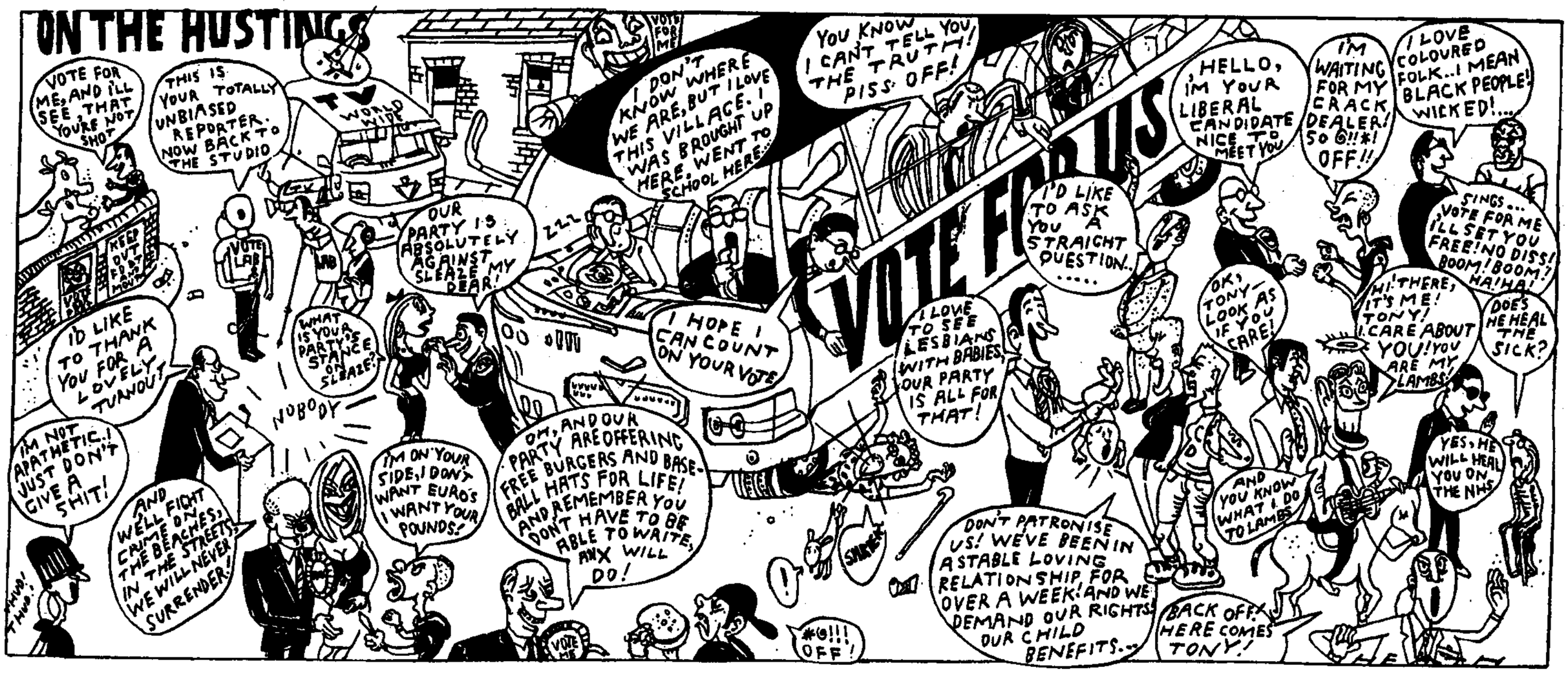
Dear Sir,
It has been brought to my attention that in a recent book it has been claimed that I am "distant, cold, remote and stand-offish with regard to Prince Charles". That is why I have asked my secretary to write this letter to you expressing my deep regret that untrue sentiments should have ever been attributed to myself.

Commander Sir Percival
Goodtrouser (RN Retd)
pp HRH Duke of Edinburgh

P.S. Grow up you big girls blouse and STOP blubbering!

Philip

HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW


ON THE HUSTINGS
VOTE FOR ME, AND I'LL SEE THAT YOU'RE NOT SHOT
THIS IS YOUR TOTALLY UNBIASED REPORTER. NOW BACK TO THE STUDIO
TV WORLD WIDE
VOTE FOR ME
I DON'T KNOW WHERE WE ARE, BUT I LOVE THIS VILLAGE. I WAS BROUGHT UP HERE, WENT TO SCHOOL HERE
YOU KNOW I CAN'T TELL YOU THE TRUTH! PISS OFF!
VOTE FOR US
HELLO, I'M YOUR LIBERAL CANDIDATE NICE TO MEET YOU
I'M WAITING FOR MY CRACK DEALER! SO G!!*! OFF!!
I LOVE COLOURED FOLK.. I MEAN BLACK PEOPLE! WICKED!...
SINGS... VOTE FOR ME I'LL SET YOU FREE! NO DISS! BOOM! BOOM! HA! HA!
KEEP OUT FOR MY MOUTH
VOTE LAB
I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR A LOVELY TURNOUT
I'M NOT APATHETIC. I JUST DON'T GIVE A SHIT!
AND WE'LL FIGHT THEM ON THE BEACHES, IN THE STREETS... WE WILL NEVER SURRENDER!
OUR PARTY IS ABSOLUTELY AGAINST SLEAZE DEAR!
WHAT IS YOUR PARTY'S STANCE ON SLEAZE?
NOBODY
I'M ON YOUR SIDE, I DON'T WANT EUROS I WANT YOUR POUNDS!
I HOPE I CAN COUNT ON YOUR VOTE
OH, AND OUR PARTY ARE OFFERING FREE BURGERS AND BASE-BALL HATS FOR LIFE! AND REMEMBER YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE ABLE TO WRITE, ANX WILL DO!
I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU A STRAIGHT QUESTION.....
I LOVE TO SEE LESBIANS WITH BABIES, OUR PARTY IS ALL FOR THAT!
OK, TONY— LOOK AS IF YOU CARE!
HI! THERE, IT'S ME! TONY! I CARE ABOUT YOU! YOU ARE MY LAMBS!
DOES HE HEAL THE SICK?
YES, HE WILL HEAL YOU ON THE NHS
AND YOU KNOW WHAT I DO TO LAMBS
DON'T PATRONISE US! WE'VE BEEN IN A STABLE LOVING RELATIONSHIP FOR OVER A WEEK! AND WE DEMAND OUR RIGHTS! OUR CHILD BENEFITS...
BACK OFF! HERE COMES TONY!
#G!!! OFF!

DIARY

LADY THATCHER

Fighting fit! Fighting fit! I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king! So let us to the battle, my friends! Kill! Kill! Kill!

If you'll just let me finish. We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.

The lesson of my generation is that we should never give in. Never! Not ever! Never ever! Never! In those dark days of the war, when the Germans under Adolf Hitler and Gerhard Schroeder were busy attacking us, day in, day out, I turned to Winston in our secret bunker in Whitehall, looked him straight in the eye and said to him, "If you'll just let me finish, Winston – we must hold firm! This is no time for the wibble-wobble! We must fight to win!"

Well, all I can say is thank goodness Winston saw sense and heeded my warning. His greatest talent was always his extraordinary capacity to listen to advice.

The British are a stubborn, independent, freedom-loving people. My goodness, we are. If you'll just let me finish. That is the very essence of our character. We value our liberty like no other race on this earth. Look at the French, strutting about in their berets, with onions everywhere! But believe you me it was the good old British bowler hat that won the war. And we were never reliant on onions.

And that is why, once the war was won – not only by me, but by others too, for I've always been swift to give credit – we British said, loud and clear, "We shall not be bullied into submission. We shall have no truck with the forces of socialism and its iniquitous culture of dependency!" And that is why, in 1945, we followed our stubborn, fiercely independent instincts and voted Winston back in. And that is the lesson of history.

When I took over from Winston some good few years later, I was utterly determined to push on with his fierce and valiant struggle against the Europeans.

No wibble-wobble. No timid Timothys. No cowardly Cornelias. No surrender.

Our duty is to defend liberty and to show the world we have the determination so to do. I decided then and there that if we wished to save our beloved pound, there was only course of action to take.

We would bomb Dresden.

And let me tell you this: IT WORKED! Our beloved pounds, shillings and pence were saved for future generations to enjoy and to pass onto their children, and their children's children. No more would the Nazi jackboot prevent us from paying for the Great British Banger with our shiny British tuppence-ha'penny.

But of course, Messrs Blair and Brown have learnt nothing from history. Nothing. Nil! Nit! In my day, if anything arose, you dealt with it quickly. You did not let it fester. That was not our way. But all is not lost. There is still time for Mr Blair to come to his senses. Today, I urge him to dip into history books, to take a deep breath – and to bomb Dresden once more!

And as our gallant young men – proud, decent Britons every one of them – prepare to carpet-bomb that wretched German city, let us remember for one moment why they are so doing.

It is so that the rest of us – we, the British race, who exported hope and freedom to the world – may pass on our earnings to future generations.

To my own children. To my own son, Mark. And my daughter. And their children, if any.

The family stands at the very heart of the British way of life. That for me is the message of Jesus Christ.

Jesus taught us that the British are a proud race, undaunted by tyrants, always ready to go it alone.

And the Christian faith teaches us, too, that higher taxation increases dependence on the state and by so doing diminishes personal liberty.

Forty days and forty long, dark nights. No – it cannot have been easy for Jesus in the desert as he fought off the demands and entreaties of our European masters. But I gave him the backbone. I said, "If you'll just let me finish. We shall never flinch from the struggle. A mighty burden rests upon our shoulders. The mighty burden of guarding our basic freedoms against the iniquity of a single currency. Let us be about our business!"

And, with the sheer grit and spunk of a true Briton, Jesus heeded well my advice: for the next two thousand years Britain remained independent of Europe and all its wiles. So if the Bible is to teach us anything, it is to trust to our doughty instincts and beware a single currency.

William Hague. Remember that name, because otherwise it is a name you are likely to forget.

William is good, he's a hard worker, he's making my views very clear. He is the right man with the right message. And that message is, "The legacy of Margaret Thatcher lives on in our stubborn, fiercely independent British hearts. If we surrender the pound, we betray all that past generations down the ages have lived and died to defend. And that is not our Conservative way. Vote for Margaret Thatcher and a glorious future for Great Britain."

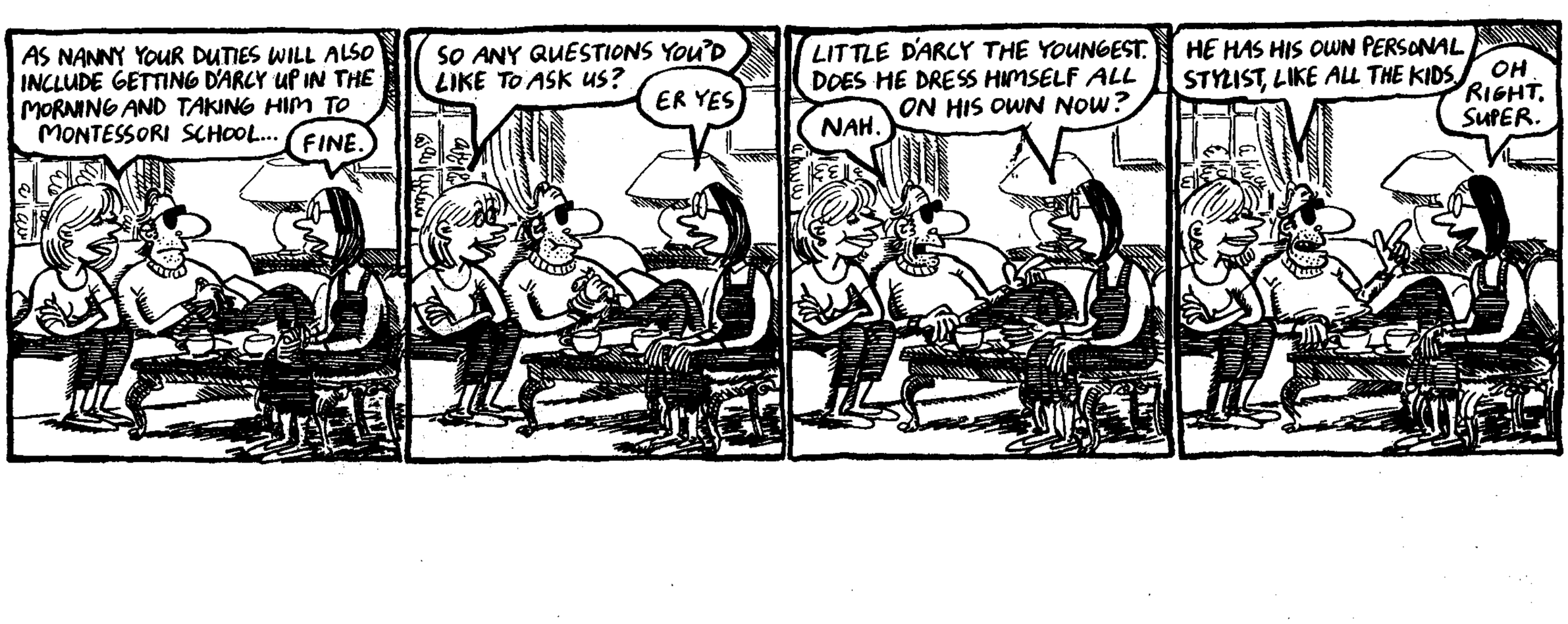
I greatly enjoy speaking to him. He has a marvellous future behind him. And in time to come, he has it in him to become an excellent junior Minister. He is quick to learn. "If you'll just let me finish," I tell him. "Britain is an island, surrounded by sea. And that is not something we should ever allow ourselves to forget. The Lady's not for turning! Ministers decide! Rejoice! Rejoice!"

The day after the election, I plan to be back at my desk at Downing Street, business as usual. And I know that the first phone call to congratulate me will come from Ronnie Reagan at the White House. But we must not rest on our laurels. There is still so much to do. First, of course, we must push through the Community Charge – something the British, being a fiercely independent people, have really taken to their hearts. But what would Mr Kinnock know about that!?! He's frit, frit! Treachery with a smile on its face. If you'll just let me finish –

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER


AS NANNY YOUR DUTIES WILL ALSO INCLUDE GETTING D'ARCY UP IN THE MORNING AND TAKING HIM TO MONTESSORI SCHOOL...
FINE.
SO ANY QUESTIONS YOU'D LIKE TO ASK US?
ER YES
LITTLE D'ARCY THE YOUNGEST. DOES HE DRESS HIMSELF ALL ON HIS OWN NOW?
NAH.
HE HAS HIS OWN PERSONAL STYLIST, LIKE ALL THE KIDS.
OH RIGHT. SUPER.

Literary Review

Feud's Corner

Blackbird Singing: Poems and Lyrics 1965-1999

Paul McCartney

(Faber, £14.99)

SIR Paul McCartney was furious to find his poem *Black Jacket* in a recent Pseuds Corner and told an interviewer in the *Radio Times* that he would not be giving the magazine any more donations.

This came as a shock to *Private Eye* staff who had no idea that Macca had given them donations. No-one could remember any. Bookworm even made up a short poem on the spot

"Donations aren't donations/if you haven't/sent them in."

But this is unfair. Even though there are no records of any donations in the files, Sir Paul's personal assistant is adamant that Sir Paul gave the late Peter Cook "a substantial sum of money" in the early 1970's after a libel case.

There is no evidence of Cook passing this money on and neither the editor at the time nor the company accountant have any memory of the event. Yes, John Lenon gave money to an early *Eye* appeal but McCartney? Could Sir Paul be more specific? Sadly not.

Having so much money you can't remember what you've done with it is not a problem shared by most of the disused academics and intellectual snobs whose contorted *bon mots* wind up in Pseuds Corner. But McCartney is different. With £713m to his name, he's the 36th richest man in Britain, according to the *Sunday Times* Rich List, and set to become "the pop world's first billionaire". Money, he once sang, can't buy you love. Nor, it seems, can it buy you a sense of humour.

Yet the urge to produce, to sell, to exploit the McCartney brand-name goes on. It's not enough that he was once a brilliant songwriter (though not all his songs are brilliant) and he was once or twice a great musician too. With a "sir" to his name, what Macca now wants is Artistic Validation. Hence a string of ill-judged ventures into the alien media of film (*Give My Regards To Broad Street*), painting, classical composition (Liverpool Oratorio, Standing Stone) and now, most disastrously of all, poetry.

As its subtitle makes clear, *Blackbird Singing* is not all new stuff. In fact more than half the material consists of reprinted lyrics from old Beatles, Wings and solo albums. Yesterday is here (of course) and Eleanor Rigby. These worked well as songs but printed cold on the page they seem lifeless. That's the whole point about songs, you see: they have to be sung.

However, they are as Shakespearean sonnets compared with such you-had-to-be-there-man sixties drivel as Why Don't We Do It In The Road?, a so-called "song" from the dreary White Album whose only other line is "no one will be watching us". These two lines are repeated many times, which helps fill up the page, and you could enliven your appreciation by reading them out in a different silly voice each time. But at the end of the day you are paying quite a lot of money for something which, if you like that sort of thing, you probably have already (and maybe didn't need to see written down).

Of course the great thing about being in the Beatles was that people assumed you were part of the counterculture when in fact you were just a showbiz animal. So when the Soviet tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia in 1968, you could pen a little ditty about being Back In The USSR and all your fans would be thinking "ho-ho very satirical". Only now, reading the lyrics on the page, no satirical intent appears. It really does read just like an Intourist brochure. Later Macca rewarded his red fans with an album specially for the Russian market.

If the effect of the lyrics, read in isolation, is to diminish the remembered impact of the songs, the effect of the poetry proper is even more disappointing. One may feel suitably sorry for Sir Paul over the death of his late wife, Linda, without welcoming couplets such as "I lost my wife / she lost her life" as anything better than therapy. And of course, when a great songwriter pens the words "You are / the brightest star / in a blue dawn" it is considered polite not to guffaw. That was from a poem called Dawn Star which might have been rejected by a greetings card publisher as a little on the trite side.

In a foreword, McCartney confesses how, as a teenager, he had an overwhelming desire to have a poem published in the school magazine. "I wrote something deep and meaningful," he recalls, "which was promptly rejected — and I suppose I have been trying to get my own back ever since." (Presumably by ceasing to make any more donations to the school magazine.)

An amusing parlour game might be to try guessing which, if any, of the poems in this volume was the "deep and meaningful" offering so promptly rejected by that beastly school magazine. I would suggest, as having just the right mixture of portentous teenage pomposity and incipient rockstar bullshit, the one called Steel which goes: "Steel yourself against the rapid fire / confusion of events that masquerade as life / bullet holes in time's demented curtain." (Er, that's it).

Part of the blame for this cringeworthy book must lie with Adrian Mitchell, one-time Beat poet and Beatles hanger-on and, more recently, poetry editor of the *New Statesman*. It was Mitchell who, at Linda's suggestion, compiled and edited *Blackbird Singing*, albeit with enthusiastic support from Macca, who rummaged through "several crammed teachests" to fill out a volume that might otherwise have looked a bit too like yet another great Apple barrel-scraping exercise: eg Anthology the film, the box set, the book of the TV series and the number 1 hits album of the goose that laid the golden pension fund. Not to mention Wingspan the CD, the Channel 4 home movie, the authorised biography, etc. And coming soon to the west end: *All You Need Is Cash*, the musical.

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ OF ALL the lavish encomia pronounced over Nick Hornby's new novel, quite the most bizarre was offered by John Carey. Writing in the *Sunday Times*, Professor Carey not only compared the author of *Fever Pitch* and *High Fidelity* to Dostoevsky (Fred Dostoevsky? Barry Dostoevsky? He surely can't mean the author of *The Brothers Karamazov*) but suggested that one of *How to be Good*'s chief distinguishing marks was the novelty of its theme. Nick's effort was about, um, "being good", you see, and this was a subject which most modern novelists don't get round to examining.

They don't? The hilarity that professors of literature are capable of inspiring when they get round to noticing contemporary stuff is a feature of the modern literary life, but dear me, did Prof Carey in his hot youth never read anything by that little-known moralist Iris Murdoch? Or A.S. Byatt's *The Game*, in which the husband of one of the chief characters starts inducting the dispossessed into the family home? Or indeed Nigel Molesworth ("it is a strange, lonely world when you are good", our man declares of his best-behaviour jag at St Custard's, as any fule kno?) In fact the well-meaning attempt to step up a moral gear or three — *How to be Good*'s theme — comes round in English fiction as regularly as muffins on a winter Sunday, and it's a tad surprising that Professor Carey never noticed.

■ HELP is at hand for those good-hearted folk who complain that there is too much bitchiness in the book reviews in the national papers.

This summer sees the launch of *Books Quarterly*, a glossy literary magazine in which all the titles reviewed are wonderful in their own way and all the authors profiled are fascinating, attractive people.

Unfortunately, because *Books Quarterly* is produced by Waterstone's, this good news comes at a price. It is not so much a guide to the best new titles but to those the book trade wants you to buy. The two are rarely the same.

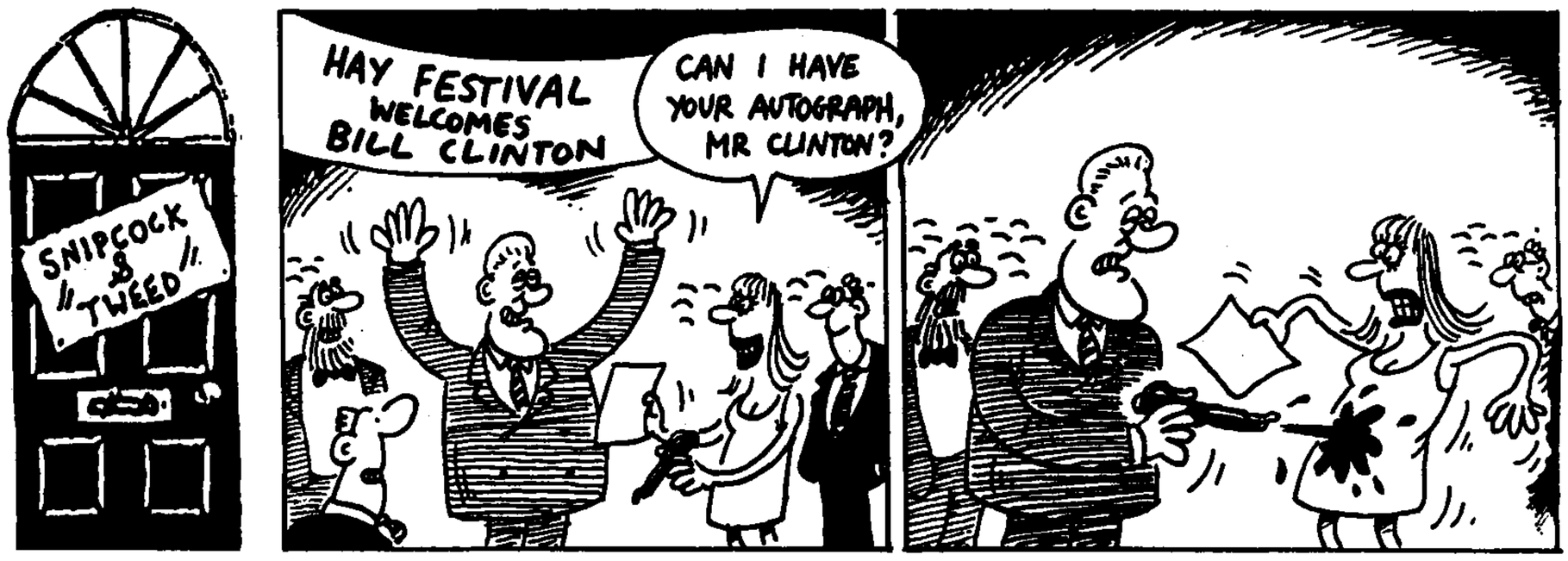
Appropriately for such a positive-spirited publication, the launch issue led with a significant celebration of Nick Hornby's *How to Be Good*. In addition to a full-page review, an extract from the novel and a "How I Write" piece from the author, Miranda Sawyer contributed an analysis of something called "lad fiction", a category which apparently embraces authors from Kingsley Amis to Irvine Welsh. This corralling of disparate authors into makeshift categories and trends is a favourite trick not just of reviewers but er... the book trade.

■ JAMES ELLROY, the peculiar American crime writer, was the subject of a recent *Arena* documentary. For 90 minutes BBC viewers were invited to watch Ellroy and a group of retired American cops chortling as they recalled their favourite rapes and murders — all illustrated by nauseating photographs of ravished and brutalised corpses.

As the murders were discussed, Ellroy seemed as alarmingly aroused as when discussing the death of his own mother which he used once again as a writerly career opportunity. "I go to great pains to be a decent and reasonable human being," the author recently told the *Sunday Telegraph*. "I'm not a sewer dweller." Really?

■ THE next edition of Oz Clarke's *Pocket Wine Book* (Little, Brown) comes with an impressive quote on the front cover: "It's the only guide you'll ever need." And who has provided this flattering endorsement? Er... Oz Clarke.

'Bookworm'



IN THE BACK

POLICE 5

SHOOTING FROM THE LIP

THE chief constable of Sussex, Paul Whitehouse, has been accused of criminal misfeasance, falsehood and discreditable conduct for his handling of the shooting of Jimmy Ashley in Hastings on 15 January 1998. So why has he still got his job?

Part of the answer lies in the unpublished detail of the confidential report by Sir John Hoddinott, former chief constable of Hampshire. It suggests that the Sussex police authority, which had to decide Whitehouse's future, was prevented from doing its job properly and that it is not only Whitehouse whose future ought to be in jeopardy.

The original charge against Whitehouse was that on the day of the shooting he issued a press release which was thoroughly misleading and made comments to reporters about Ashley which seemed to blacken the dead man's character. Ashley's family made a formal complaint. On 12 February 1998 the Sussex police authority considered that complaint and rejected it: Whitehouse was completely exonerated.

A few months later Hoddinott was called in to find out whether senior Sussex officers had been obstructing the Kent detectives who were investigating the shooting. Hoddinott looked again at the "exoneration" of Whitehouse and found several very strange things.

First he discovered something "rather strange and a cause for concern" about one Andrew Ogden, the Sussex police solicitor, who appeared to have suffered a conflict of interest. He acted as Whitehouse's aggressive legal adviser, sending away Kent detectives with a flea in their ear when they had the impudence to ask embarrassing questions about the press release; he also acted as deputy clerk to the Sussex police authority, offering advice to the members whose duty was to judge Whitehouse in relation to the self-same press release.

Hoddinott discovered that Ogden had himself been involved in producing the press release and had failed to give the authority key facts. Crucially Ogden knew that, before he told the world that all was well with the shooting, the chief constable was already aware of two worrying things: that the dead man was naked and unarmed, and that the officer who shot him had previously had his firearms permit temporarily withdrawn.

Chief constable Paul Whitehouse and Jimmy Ashley (right)

"One would have thought," Hoddinott wrote, "that a deputy clerk owed a duty to the authority to have drawn these matters to their attention."

Hoddinott also discovered that on the morning of 12 February, just before the hearing to examine Whitehouse's behaviour, the clerk to the authority, Helmut Cartwright, had received an urgent fax from the Kent detectives. This warned that the officer whose behaviour had been cleared by the press release was in fact likely to be charged with manslaughter; and it drew attention to evidence that the chief constable had indeed tried to blacken the name of the dead man.

Hoddinott found that, although the clerk had told the members of the authority that a fax had arrived, "it does not appear that members' attention was drawn to the very significant contents". And so it came to pass that Whitehouse was exonerated.

A year later, in February 1999, the whole affair went back to the Sussex police authority because Hoddinott had submitted his findings. He reported in detail on the behaviour of its clerk ("puzzling") and its deputy clerk ("concerning"). He also concluded that Whitehouse had been guilty of falsehood, not only in his press release but also in his later dealings with the Kent detectives and with the Sussex police authority itself. Hoddinott said, for example, that Whitehouse's letter of defence to the authority a year earlier had been "unsustainable in any rational sense" and "plainly perverse".

The Sussex police authority says it took no action at all against either its clerk or its deputy clerk on the grounds that it was not any part of Hoddinot's brief to investigate them. It says neither man took part in the meetings to discuss Hoddinott's report. And, even though Hoddinott had found evidence of crime as well as disciplinary offences being committed by Whitehouse, the authority decided simply to issue him with "words of advice", the lowest form of disciplinary sanction.

Now the same authority, with the same clerk and deputy clerk, is to consider the future of the deputy chief constable, Mark Jordan, who has been suspended since February 1999. He is accused of neglect of duty for authorising the firearms operation which killed Jimmy Ashley and of falsehood for lying to Kent detectives who were investigating the shooting.

Hoddinott has also described a series of "strange and sometimes bizarre happenings" involving Jordan, including his behaviour on the day of the shooting, when he told another officer "I'm not rational", disappeared into his office alone for 20 minutes in the middle of the crisis and then went for a long walk in the headquarters grounds, returning only because it was raining.

Hoddinott reviewed a list of incidents which include Jordan breaking into tears when he was accused of lying by Kent detectives, shouting at colleagues, denouncing the Kent inquiry in public and making apparently threatening remarks to an officer who had just been interviewed by Hoddinott: "Many of them are concerning in view of the sometimes bizarre behaviour they encompass, revealing a deputy chief constable who at one moment is in tears and threatening to resign and at another treating subordinates like children. It is from this that he has apparently earned the nickname, from the nursery rhyme, of 'the Duke of York'. Witnesses refer to this name and, whilst the investigating officer has tried to avoid tittle-tattle, he is much taken with this description which so graphically describes his mercurial temperament."

SAFETY LAST?

ONE UNUSUAL qualification for preferred bidders for the London tube appears to be that the members have to have been prosecuted for causing a danger to their staff and/or the public.

The "preferred" Metronet consortium assembles five firms: Adtranz; WS Atkins; Balfour Beatty; Seeboard; and Thames Water. Since April 1999, when the health and safety executive (HSE) opened its database, all five have been prosecuted at least once.

The total fines and costs levied on them – excluding Balfour Beatty's sensational £1.3m fine for the Heathrow collapse – is £139,576.62 after eight separate prosecutions.

In the last two years the consortium members have been found responsible for a subcontractor being burnt by a live cable; for failing to deal properly with asbestos in a school; for giving an employee a 650 volt electric shock; for cutting two fingers off another employee; for a "significant landslip"; for "severe head injury" to a subcontractor; for electrocuting another employee with an 11,000 volt shock; and for breaking a man's back, leaving him paralysed.

The Tubelines consortium, meanwhile, "preferred bidder" to run the Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly lines, consists of Bechtel, Amey, Halcrow Hyder and Jarvis. The last two have been fined by the HSE in the past two years. Hyder and Jarvis amassed a staggering £572,881 in fines and costs after four separate HSE prosecutions.

In the last two years Hyder has been found responsible for a "lower leg amputation" of an "operative" in a "potentially fatal accident" and for an electrician having both his arms amputated after receiving 33kv burns. Jarvis has been responsible for a contractor losing an eye and two separate train derailments in the same period.

FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS...

● **CAPE CRUSADE:** Cape plc has finally seen the writing on the wall and is looking to settle claims from thousands of South Africans suffering rare cancers and lung disease after exposure to asbestos in the company's mines and factories (*Eyes passim*).

What prompted the U-turn by the UK-based multinational (two months ago it told shareholders it was setting aside funds to compensate UK workers but was determined to fight the South Africans) is not clear.

Perhaps the threat of court-room exposure of a wealth of damning documents showing how Cape exploited the racist regime in South Africa played a part. Reports, for example, dating from the 1960s when the dangers of asbestos were already well known, justifying the use of "under age natives" – ie children. "It would be uneconomical for us to employ fully grown men to do the work done by these minors," says correspondence from Cape Blue Mines.

● **SO LOW, SOLOTEC:** The campaign by the directors of SOLOTEC, the former south London TEC, against three former low-paid and self-employed women workers shows no sign of abating – even after the *Eye* reported on it (see 1023).

The TEC is suing Carole Hackett for £750,000 for an alleged fraud, the nature of which is not at all clear. One peculiarity of the TEC that has emerged after questions from the *Eye* is that its company secretary appears to have no say whatever in company policy.

The TEC's case against the three women is being implacably conducted by Batchelors, a prominent firm of Bromley solicitors. Mr John Goddard is a partner at Batchelors and also company secretary of SOLOTEC. The *Eye* asked him about what seems to be a conflict of interest and received this reply:

"I am not and never have been a director of SOLOTEC. I am in fact the company secretary and therefore do not have any say in the decision-making process of the company. In view of this, I must refute the suggestion that there is any conflict of interest arising out of the provision of professional services to SOLOTEC by Batchelors."

● **POLICE RESTRAINT:** More on the death of Roger Sylvester, the 30-year-old black man who died after being restrained by up to eight Metropolitan police officers outside his London home more than two years ago (see *Eyes passim*).

In April Roger's family was given leave by a high court judge to challenge the decision of David Calvert-Smith, the director of public prosecutions (DPP), not to charge any of the police involved.

How odd, then, that the lord chief justice Lord Woolf has chosen to ignore normal procedure and effectively halted the review. He has called for an inquest, suggesting that that would provide the public investigation the family wants and make available all the documents the family has requested.

Normally commonsense dictates that in a case of suspicious death a criminal trial will take place before or instead of an inquest. Otherwise the accused would have a preview of all the evidence; and witnesses would be able to rehearse their evidence in a forum which has less strict rules.

Woolf also said that an inquest would allow the DPP to reconsider his decision not to prosecute in the light of fresh evidence.

But that leaves the family's suggestion – that the DPP has already got it wrong – completely untested. It also puts the family in an impossible position. The only way to challenge Woolf would be by going before appeal court judges – and they would be unlikely to criticise their boss, the lord chief justice.

THE AGM AGITATORS

Bayer facts

BRITISH surgeon Stephen Karran is an unlikely candidate for direct protest action. But last month he interrupted the German pharmaceutical giant Bayer's agm in Cologne to ask some awkward questions.

They concerned a series of drug trials the company conducted in hospitals in the UK and the Netherlands. Did Bayer mislead patients about the serious risk they faced of contracting life threatening infections? Did Bayer give false information to the Medicines Control Agency (MCA) to obtain its licence to conduct the trials? Does Bayer intend to compensate the victims or their families? And when will Bayer publish the results?

Karran got no satisfactory answers so took his concerns to the Cologne police and has asked them to investigate.

His concerns centre on drug trials in the mid 90s involving about 800 patients undergoing large bowel surgery. They were asked to try Bayer's ciprofloxacin (Ciproxin) antibiotic as a protection against operative infection. What patients – and it seems hospitals — were not initially told was that Bayer had commissioned research some four years earlier showing that the antibiotic became far less efficient when taken with other pre-surgery drugs.

Karran was one of those early researchers and he had told Bayer of the serious potential absorption problems associated with Ciproxin. When he found that his then hospital, Southampton University Hospital, was about to take part in the new surgery trials, he alerted its ethics committee.

It was later learnt that 28 of 61 patients given Ciproxin and whose records were examined went on to develop infections which needed treatment with powerful drugs. This was far higher than the 5-10 percent rate associated with usual antibiotics.

Karran went public on the issue more than a year ago after his inquiries to Bayer and the Medicines Control Agency, which gave the go-ahead for the surgery trials, went unanswered.

When the *Eye* put Karran's questions to Bayer last week, a spokesman denied the company had misled patients about infection risks. It would not say whether patients were informed of the absorption problem trials before their consent was obtained, nor whether it had told the MCA of those tests when it sought its licence.

The company maintained that only 7 percent of patients given Ciproxin had also been given opiate premeds and that their infection rates were the same or less than those seen in patients who received the usual prophylactic antibiotics. But that ignores patients given other drugs identified by Karran.

Asked when it was going to publish the results, Bayer said investigators "may consider publishing in due course". But Karran believes only a full inquiry will force the drug giant to reveal how many patients suffered serious infections.

The Grabbey habit

ANGRY at Abbey National's heavy handed tactics in pursuing people for huge debts years after repossessing their homes, protesters succeeded in highjacking the Grabbey National's agm.

Armed with a share or two in the Abbey Group, they challenged Lord Tugendhat's reelection as chairman. One protestor, Vic Harper, suggested Tugendhat should stand down given the criticism in the Commons of the Grabbey's methods in pursuing debts that it often could not substantiate.

"I am afraid you are bringing to my attention something of which I am unaware," said his lordship. "If I told you [I] was aware of the terms of the early-day motion that would be an untruthful answer..."

Really? In November last year, as reported by the *Eye*, Tugendhat wrote to Portsmouth MP Mike Hancock specifically about the pursuit of debtors. His letter started: "I note your early-day motion of 31st October..."

Abbey National chief executive Ian Harley (left) and chairman Lord Tugendhat

More Consignia Lookalikes

Proving once again what a difficult business Design Consultancy is, what a fine job Dragon did for Consignia in coming up with a new logo and what good value for money the Post Office got for its £2 million name change.

Trade-Ranger

ALLIED

www.net catatonia

DAYDREAM

Friends like these

DEMUTUALISATION is all the rage among directors of insurance companies, building societies and the like, and it means transferring control from the policy-holders and mortgagees to company directors.

Its main purpose is to allow directors to give themselves higher salaries and share options. But there is a snag. The members have to vote for the change.

In the past it has been quite easy to persuade members by offering them money if they vote Yes. But more and more members are rumbling this device and companies have to work harder and harder at persuasion. A recent example is the proposed demutualisation of Friends Provident Life, a harmless insurance company that has been looking after its policyholders for as long as anyone can remember but whose directors now want to get richer.

The papers recently sent to members instruct them to: "Tick the FOR box if you want Friends Provident Life Office to demutualise and amend its rules. This will result in demutualisation benefits being issued as described in the members circular.

"Tick the AGAINST box if you do not want Friends Provident Life Office to demutualise and amend its rules and therefore do not want demutualisation benefits to be issued as described in the members circular.

Read that quickly and you might think that if you vote against demutualisation, you are not entitled to the benefits. But in fact you are entitled to benefits unless the majority vote against demutualisation. Anyway, the demutualisation vote is not really a vote at all. It is a bribe.

PRISONS

BLANTYRE BALLS-UP

TRUMPED up disciplinary charges brought against former Blantyre House prison governor Eoin McLellan-Murray have – surprise, surprise – resulted in no disciplinary action.

Eye readers will recall that after an unprecedented night raid on what was the country's highly-praised "model jail" and a four-month trawl through the entire establishment, the worst the prison service could level at McLellan-Murray was a charge of sloppy book-keeping.

Even that had nothing to do with the management of a multi-million resettlement prison. It related only to the jail's charity account, which holds funds raised by inmates in support of Mencap and other good causes. No money was missing but a couple of items bought for the charities had not been properly receipted. What made the disciplinary charge even more outrageous was that McLellan-Murray was not directly responsible for the book-keeping.

After a long inquiry the prison service decided there would be no disciplinary penalties against McLellan-Murray but he would receive "written guidance on procedural issues".

The effective clearing of his name now paves the way for investigation into his series of complaints about the man behind the botched raid, area manager Tom Murtagh. That is being conducted by home office director of personnel Gareth Hadley. Watch this space...

Woman of Straw?

HOME SECRETARY Jack Straw has found a sly way to counter the accusation that he is replacing his meddlesome chief inspector of prisons Sir David Ramsbottom with a patsy.

Rambo's replacement is one Anne Owers, formerly of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants and of Justice. We must apologise to Straw for suggesting that he was looking for a poodle. Owers is certainly no soft touch.

Instead, the home secretary has developed a more subtle way to try to stifle criticism of Britain's hell-hole jails: by attempting to merge the prison inspectorate's methods and criteria for inspections with the prison service's own targets and operating standards.

This is viewed as an attack on the inspectorate's independence. And it is not be the first time Straw has tried to water down the powers of prison inspectors. Napo, the probation officers' union, said he first tried last year when he sought to merge Rambo's team with the less "noisy" probation inspectorate.

Straw's latest move follows a review by Lord Laming, formerly of the social service inspectorate, who was called in to see why the chief inspector of prisons was identifying failing jails when the prison service was not. It is evident to anyone in the service that prison managers were simply ticking boxes — ie, does the jail have a race relations committee or an anti-bullying strategy — while the inspectorate was actually finding out whether they had any impact on inmates' welfare.

Owers' first test will be to resist any home office moves against the inspectorate to ensure it does not end up ticking prison service boxes.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

THE Bofors commissions scandal is not the only incident which shows those ever ingratiating politician-collectors, the Hinduja brothers, in a less than flattering light. Two unpublicised American court cases raise further questions regarding the willingness of Tony Blair and his acolytes to cultivate their financial support and reward it with British passports.

One case involved abortive plans to supply military spares to Iran's air force in the initial years after the fall of the shah, the Hindujas' first great patron. The regime of Ayatollah Khomeini was at that time seen as the west's main enemy in the Middle East. The second involved allegations of threats and blackmail in a power struggle at an Arab-controlled French bank by dissident shareholders supported by the Hindujas.

Both cases saw these friends and entertainers of the politically famous associated with businessmen of less impeccable stature and institutions such as the Bank of Conmen & Cocaine International.

Parviz Lavi is an Iranian arms dealer, now based in the US, who claims to have known the Hindujas since the 1970s. In 1983 he was sued by a Swiss company, Alcari, over the loss of a $558,000 performance bond to cover a 1981 contract for the supply of $11m worth of fuses to the Iranian Air Force. The bond was confiscated when the fuses did not arrive.

The bond had been arranged by Gopichand Hinduja through an overdraft from BCCI with whom the Hindujas banked. Alcari, it emerged, was a Hinduja-controlled entity used to do business with Iran. Eldest brother Srichand Hinduja was described as the "management" of Alcari by one of its executives.

Just as the Hindujas switched seamlessly from the Tories to Labour, so they continued to do business with those who overthrew their benefactor, the shah of Iran. Alcari sued Lavi and his companies in New York for $1.25m, including lost profits of $500,000.

Lavi countersued for more than $25m claiming that the Hinduja company was responsible for the failure to supply the fuses because it had insisted on a US supplier, claiming it could obtain an export licence for Iran despite the American embargo. Similarly Alcari was said to have thwarted a further $4m contract for batteries and other material by failing to obtain export licences and end-user certificates.

Lavi and Alcari were supposed to split a $1m profit on that contract. These two failures had resulted in the Iranians confiscating a second performance bond for $209,000 and refusing to do business with Lavi, who claimed $20m in damages. He also claimed that $431,000 paid to Alcari in a purported 1982 settlement of its claims was fraudulent because the performance bond had been arranged/lost by G.P. Hinduja.

Alcari and the Hindujas denied all Lavi's claims saying the contracts had failed because he had not been able to arrange suppliers or licences. They also denied making any settlement with Lavi. "GP" and "SP" were to be called as witnesses, but the case settled on the day of trial in 1988. However, that was not before Lavi had produced a remarkable though unsigned 1987 affidavit from his former man in Iran — Ahmad Tabatabai, who had negotiated the contracts.

The draft Tabatabai affidavit claimed he had been assured by the Hindujas' office manager in Teheran that they would be able to obtain a US export licence for the fuses through "their good old friend" General Hassan Toufanian, who had been in charge of arms purchases under the shah but who was now in exile in the US. An unidentified Hinduja brother was described as the "bagman" for Toufanian by American author Joseph C. Goulden in his book *The Death Merchant,* about rogue CIA agent turned arms dealer Edwin Wilson.

Tabatabai's unsigned affidavit accused the Hindujas of deliberately seeking to ensure the Iranians were not supplied so as to assist military defeat by Iraq and provoke the return of the shah. The draft affidavit went on to allege that he had been contacted by one of the Hindujas, an employee and their lawyers encouraging him not to testify for Lavi and offering substantial rewards — $200,000 was mentioned — for his silence and help.

Tabatabai was undoubtedly a bitter witness. He blamed the failed contracts for being arrested and imprisoned in Iran, forced to flee and losing all his assets worth more than $1m. No signed affidavit was ever produced but Tabatabai was in court prepared to give evidence on the day the case was settled. The Hinduja camp denied all his allegations which were never proved. The case was settled and the settlement kept confidential in return for a $37,500 payment by Lavi and an agreement not to discuss his dealings with the Hindujas. In 1998 Lavi was jailed for five years for a scheme to sell F-14 engine parts to Iran in breach of US sanctions.

Soon after Lavi settled his case Tabatabai sued the Hindujas and Alcari over the aborted Iran Air Force contracts and his losses. His New York action did not repeat all the detailed claims of the unsigned affidavit.

Tabatabai claimed the Hindujas had tried to source the fuses from Israel via Lisbon and had drawn down $429,000 against the letter of credit supplied by the Iranians. Because of this and the non-supply Tabatabai blamed the Hindujas and Alcari for his imprisonment. Tabatabai claimed $30m in compensation.

In a sworn 1989 affidavit Tabatabai repeated that he had been assured that G.P.Hinduja had "great influence" with General Toufanian who would arrange the US export licences. The Hindujas denied all his claims again and the case was dismissed in 1990 because they had not been served with the proceedings within the time limit.

Lavi and Tabatabai were hardly the most impartial or reliable of accusers but their cases throw some interesting light on the dark corners of the Hindujas' past in Iran.

In 1993 their involvement with powerful Arab figures was highlighted when they were named in a $200m civil action alleging racketeering, coercion and fraud brought in New York by some of the former owners and senior managers of the Paris-based Saudi European Bank which had been founded by the former Saudi oil minister Sheikh Yamani. The bank had to be saved from collapse in 1989.

The Hindujas and their Amas banking group were shareholders in the offshore company that owned

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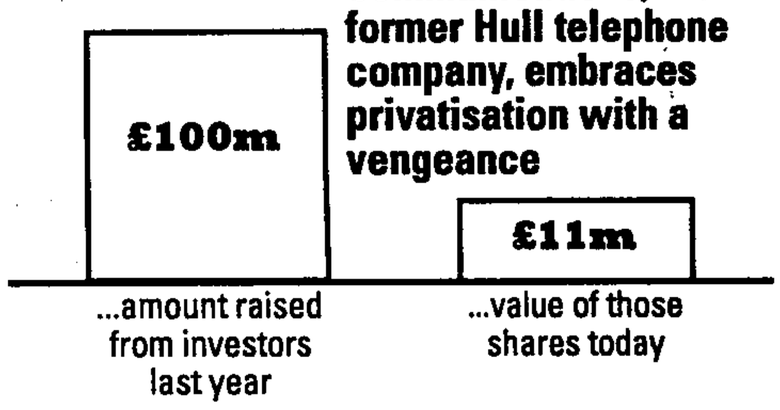

SEB. They were accused of allying with a dissident group of other shareholders to seize control. This group included Mafia-linked South African oil trader Marino Chiavelli. Its supporters included the American financier Charles Keating, later convicted and acquitted on appeal of looting a major Californian savings and loan (building society), and Abbas Gokal, jailed for his role in pillaging BCCI.

Amas had become a shareholder (20 percent) in 1984 along with Gokal and Keating. Yamani was a shareholder in the Hinduja company Gulf Oil Trading from 1984 until 1989.

The Hindujas were accused in the New York action of from 1985 failing to deliver on a promised 5 percent stake in Gulf Oil in return for investment banking services; trying to persuade SEB to secretly buy a Swiss bank for them and purchase a plane for their use; urging the payment of a commission to an Algerian minister in order to obtain an oil contract for Gulf Oil; and requesting a $25m non-recourse loan.

The action also claimed that the Hindujas had threatened from 1985 to sue unless Amas was bought out at cost plus interest and had sought Yamani's help to remove the top management at SEB. In 1988 Amas filed a civil and criminal complaint against the bank's managers in France. This was later dismissed. Another claim was filed and dismissed in Curacao where the bank's parent company was based.

When the French regulators demanded that SEB be recapitalised because of unpaid loans and withdrawn deposits and credit lines, blamed on the dissidents, the Hindujas and their allies refused to support the bank resulting in its enforced sale to a French group for just $3.5m.

The Hindujas and Amas denied all the accusations and insisted the New York court had no jurisdiction in the dispute. The Hindujas personally were not served in the case and so never became defendants before a New York judge threw out the case against Amas for lack of jurisdiction in 1996. The case against the other defendants went the same way.

But although it could be said once again that the Hindujas had been vindicated and no findings had been made against them or their companies, the untried SEB claims — just like those of Lavi and Tabatabai — suggest that those at MI6 and elsewhere who believed the Hindujas should not have been granted British passports were correct to feel a concern that has never troubled Tony Blair with his love all things about the rich and big business.

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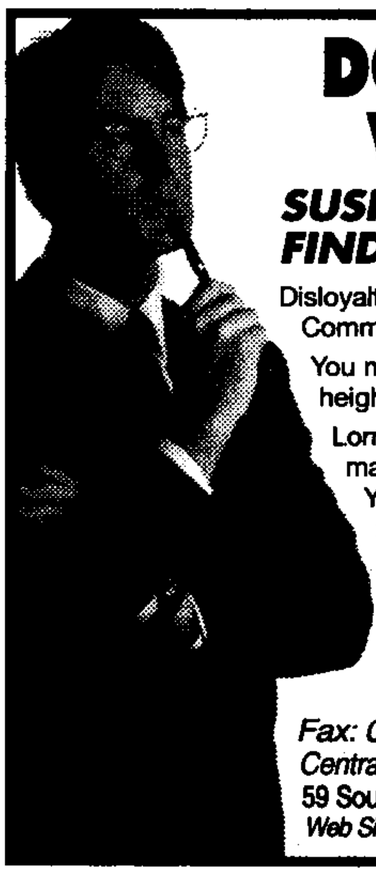

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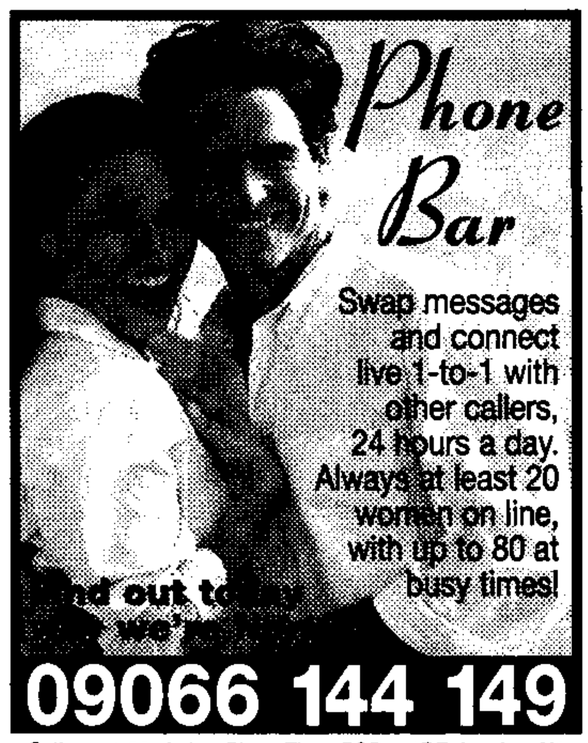

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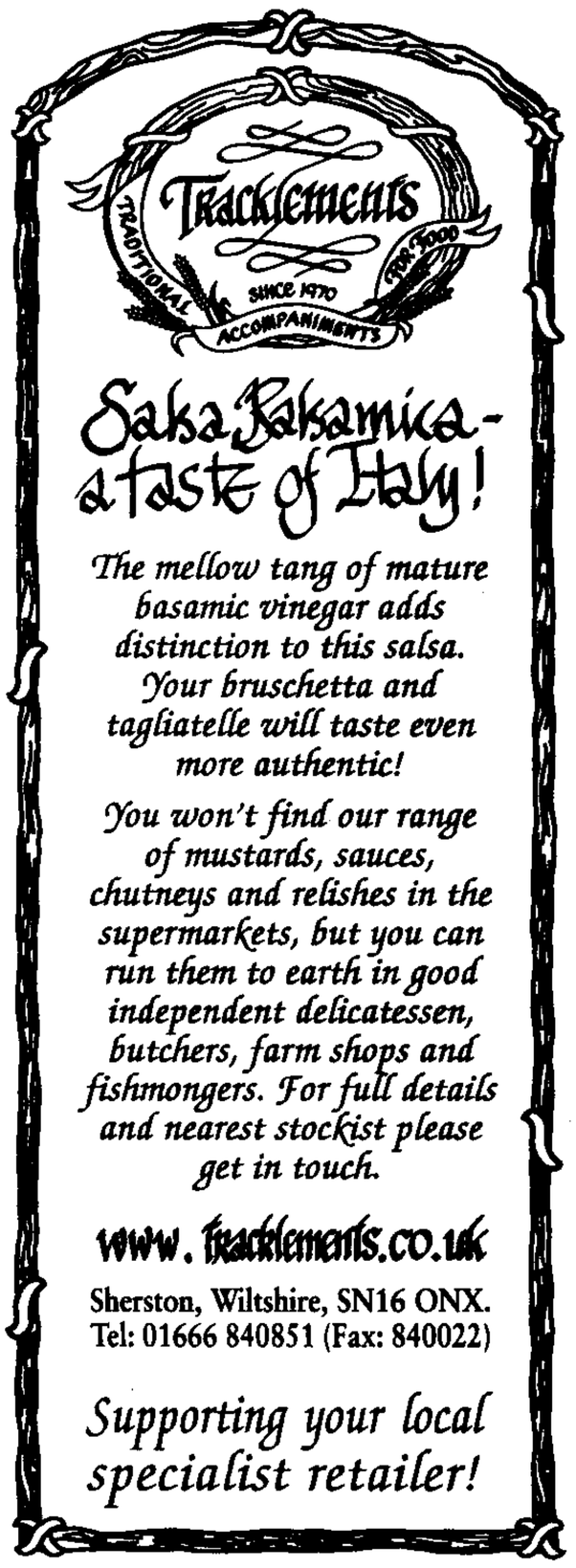

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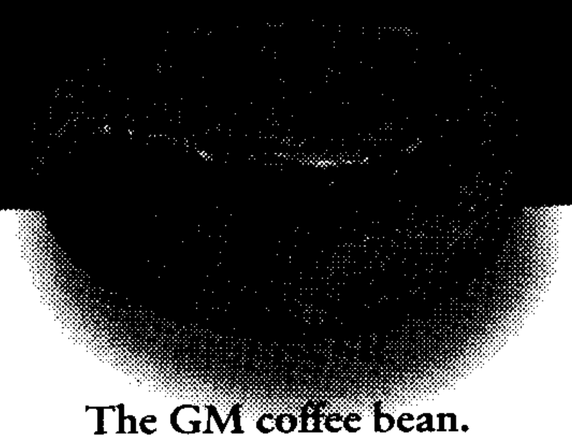

The GM coffee bean.
Could potentially push 60 million people further into poverty.

You have been warned: GM ripening-controlled coffee has some serious side ects. Up to 60 million people could be permanently harmed by drinking it.

So what makes GM coffee so destructive?

In nature, coffee beans don't all ripen at the same time, making any mecha- ed picking inefficient. No wonder then that 70% of all coffee is grown by small- der farmers in developing countries around the world. Changing the way cof- is grown would wipe out the livelihoods of these poor farmers and push mil- ns of people further into poverty.

Frighteningly, a US company, ICTI, is developing genetically modified coffee ans, which can be made to ripen all at the same time. These GM coffee beans n be sprayed with a chemical which 'switches them on' making them perfect to mass machine-harvested.

There is no doubt that GM ripening-controlled coffee is being developed for -ge plantations. They will be able to increase the size of their operations and istically reduce the size of their workforce.

Up to seven million poor farmers won't be able to afford the chemical or com- e with the big companies. As a result many will go out of business, be forced to ve their families to the cities in search of work and plunged into conditions of palling health, squalor and the inescapable unemployment of the urban devel- ing world.

Now, we at ActionAid are not against technology being used to make food re productive, it's just that we are horrified that GM coffee will destroy the lives of poor coffee farmers and their families, rather than improve it.

What can you do? (Apart from getting angry.)

UK supermarkets and coffee retailers have the power to stop the development of GM coffee. They rely on your business and if they know you won't swallow GM coffee, then they won't stock it. There will then be little point in growing it.

As a consumer you have a powerful voice. Use it.

Call us today on **0800 482 400** or return the coupon to find out how you can make the UK supermarkets and coffee retailers wake up and smell the GM coffee.

Please send me information on how I can help stop this GM coffee being developed.
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